REVIEW OF THE VA CEMETERY AND H.R. 2220 AND H.R. 2506

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

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REVIEW OF THE VA CEMETERY SYSTEM AND H.R. 2220 AND H.R. 2506

THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 1983

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:04 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Richard C. Shelby (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Shelby, Mollohan, Mica, Richardson, Smith, Sundquist, and Bilirakis.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SHELBY

Mr. SHELBY. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The subcommittee will come to order.

The panelists who are going to testify, I would like them to come up to the hearing table and take their seats.

Today's hearings are part of this subcommittee's annual oversight of the national cemetery system, the burial benefits program, and the memorial headstone and marker program administered by the Veterans' Administration.

Congressional concern with national cemeteries and a Federal burial policy for our Nation's veterans is a long-standing one. As a matter of fact, a few cemeteries in the current VA system were established shortly after the Civil War.

It is through our national cemeteries, more than anything else, that the Federal Government pays tribute, not only to our war dead, but to all those who have served in the military service.

Many important improvements have been made in the system since the enactment of Public Law 93-43, the National Cemeteries Act of 1973, which transferred the national cemetery system from the Department of the Army to the Veterans' Administration.

One of these improvements authorized the VA to assist individual States in establishing, expanding and/or improving veterans cemeteries. The establishment of State veterans cemeteries compliments the national cemetery system and enables a lot of veterans to be interred in their State of residence.

As the authority for these grants expires next year, we are today considering H.R. 2506,[1] which would be a bill that would extend

[1] See p. 30.

this program for another 5 years. Additionally, the subcommittee is also considering H.R. 2220,[2] a bill which would authorize the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress, as is currently done for land adjacent to medical facilities.

Similar legislation passed the House during the 97th Congress, but was not acted upon in the Senate. Hopefully, we will be able to enact this proposal this year as it will improve access to a few of our cemeteries located in heavily-congested areas.

As today marks the first meeting of our Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs in this 98th Congress, I want to welcome all of you and tell you that I look forward to our working together.

At this time I am particularly pleased to recognize some of my colleagues here. The gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I support this legislation. I have been at two of our cemeteries at Tennessee, one in Nashville and one in Memphis, and I can tell you that in each of those very shortly we will have completed capacity in both cemeteries. I am concerned and I support this legislation.

Mr. SHELBY. The gentleman from West Virginia.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am also supportive of this legislation. I have some further comment on related topics as soon as our witness finishes testifying.

Mr. SHELBY. I will so recognize you at that time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I would like to make an opening statement, if I may.

Mr. SHELBY. Yes, sir.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Mr. BILIRAKIS. On behalf of the members of the Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs, may I say that it is, as our chairman has already told us, a distinct pleasure to be able to hear your views on matters relating to the Veterans' Administration's national cemetery system.

I strongly support all of your efforts to establish, expand and improve our national veterans cemeteries. However, I wish to speak specifically on a cemetery of great importance to the many veterans in Florida, the Withlacoochee, Florida National Cemetery.

This past February the Governor and Florida cabinet voted to donate 400 acres of land in the Withlacoochee State Forest for a new national veterans cemetery. This site will consist of 13,000 burial sites for phase one of the construction. In addition, Withlacoochee will be the first site in Florida to provide garden-type niches for those who prefer an alternative plan for the interment of cremated remains. This need is extremely evident, for in California alone, requests for cremation sites have increased 36 percent over the past year. Due to this increase, I feel garden niches are a vital addition to Florida's cemetery system.

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[2] See p. 23.

As a Representative of a State with a veteran population of 1.5 million, I feel it is imperative that we accommodate these individuals who have served our country. At present, Florida has three national cemeteries located in Pensacola, St. Augustine, and St. Petersburg. However, only one cemetery has available gravesites. The St. Petersburg cemetery has been closed since 1964, and St. Augustine since 1949. Pensacola has the ability to accommodate 590 interments per year, Mr. Chairman. Florida has a projected annual veteran death rate of 35,000. Clearly, there is an urgent need for the establishment of a new cemetery and soon.

I am well aware, Mr. Chairman, of the timetable the Veterans' Administration has kindly provided me. As it stands now, the proposed cemetery would not be open for interments until the spring of 1988. Surely, in view of the staggering amount of veterans deaths and the lack of gravesites, we must work with all deliberate speed to finalize the site decision, appropriate funds, and complete construction.

Funds for construction are presently scheduled to be included in the tentative construction program for fiscal year 1986. Our job is to see that these funds are included in the Federal budget and possibly have them advanced to an earlier timetable.

It is my understanding that the environmental impact study for the new cemetery is complete and is expected to appear in the Federal Register within the next few weeks. Also, an architectural engineering firm from Florida has already been employed and is prepared to begin work on the Withlacoochee master plan this June. What we are waiting for now is a final decision from the Veterans' Administration regarding the appropriate landsite for the cemetery. As you can probably guess, I am in strong favor of the Withlacoochee State Forest land for the Veterans' Administraton cemetery. In fact, I expressed my interest last February in a letter to Florida's Gov. Bob Graham, urging him and the cabinet to seriously consider the Withlacoochee site. I know all of my colleagues on the committee agree that the need for a national cemetery in Florida is, indeed, prevalent.

In view of the approval of the Governor, the Florida cabinet, and several members of the Florida delegation for the Withlacoochee National Forest land, I urge the Veterans' Administration and this subcommittee to work together to expedite approval, funding, and construction of the Withlacoochee National Veterans Cemetery. Any unnecessary delays, Mr. Chairman, will undoubtedly increase the cost of this project and perhaps the severity of the overcrowded Florida cemetery system itself.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity.

Mr. SHELBY. The Chair now recognizes the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all I want to begin by congratulating you for this hearing. As ranking member, I look forward to many successful meetings with the members of this subcommittee and, of course, con-

tinuing our strong relationship with the major veterans organizations.

During the next few months we will be addressing issues of vital concern to our Nation's veterans and their families. These concerns include the VA home loan program, veterans housing issues, the American battle monuments, and the subject of our hearing this morning, the Veterans' Administration's national cemetery system.

Two bills put forward by the administration and now under consideration by this subcommittee are encouraging efforts to improve and expand the VA's cemetery system. I believe that these proposals should receive our full support.

The first bill, H.R. 2220, would provide authority to the VA Administrator to make contributions to local and State authorities. These contributions would allow needed construction improvement such as traffic controls, road construction and walkways be made in cemeteries all across the Nation, all of which would contribute to the safety and maintenance of the entire cemetery system.

The second bill, H.R. 2506, would provide for a 5-year extension of the authority to grant the various States 50–50 matching funds to assist them in establishing, expanding, or improving State veteran cemeteries. The authority and appropriation of adequate funds is an absolute need if we are to fulfill our obligation to accommodate the greatly increased demand for gravesites in the next decade and through the year 2000.

In my home State of New Jersey, for example, Beverly National Cemetery is completely filled, and the cemetery at Finn's Point cannot possibly be used because of the consistently high water levels in and around the property. New Jersey veterans, therefore, are in desperate need of matching funds from the Department of Memorial Affairs which would allow construction of the first State veterans cemetery in New Jersey to begin in Arneytown.

As I have already brought to the attention of Administrator Walters, New Jersey Gov. Tom Cain recently completed the transition which made the 186-acre tract at Arneytown available for the cemetery. The total construction of the State of New Jersey toward this project is now some $600,000. Because of the urgent need, I would like to ask again that this application be considered as soon as possible.

A final matter I wish to bring to your attention, Mr. Chairman, is legislation which has been introduced by our colleague from Missouri, Gene Taylor. H.R. 2383 would amend an act of March 3, 1911, and provide for the immediate use of the Confederate Cemetery at Springfield, Mo. for the purpose of burying eligible veterans. It seems only fair that this land should be designated as the Springfield National Cemetery which should be open to all veterans who wish to be buried there.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to express my appreciation for all that you have done and to those who will be making presentations today.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Our first panel will be Mr. Paul Bannai. He is going to be accompanied by Mr. Vince Corrado. Your entire statement will be included in the record, without objection, and you can summarize it for

the benefit of the committee. This will leave us some time for questions.

STATEMENT OF PAUL T. BANNAI, CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS, VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION, ACCOMPANIED BY VINCENT L. CORRADO, DEPUTY CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

Mr. BANNAI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee. On behalf of the Administrator of the Veterans' Administration, Harry N. Walters, I want to thank you very much for the privilege of appearing before you this morning.

The letter that you sent to us on March 15 expressed some interest in receiving current information on several matters. There was the available grave space in existing national cemeteries; the proposed expansion plans; the VA policy on columbaria for those cemeteries closed to in-ground burials; the State cemetery grant program; and the current status of six cemeteries that are under construction or are undergoing expansion.

In the text that I have presented for you I have addressed each of the areas of interest in the order that you stated. Let me just point out that at the present time we do have about 230,000 available gravesites in the developed areas of our cemeteries. The undeveloped areas have a potential yield at the present time of over 3,500,000 gravesites. Those areas will be programed for development in increments as the need arises to meet the veterans' burial needs.

An accumulative total of more than 1,600,000 interments have been made in national cemeteries throughout the system to date, using about 1,500,000 gravesites and more than 6,000 columbarium or garden-type niches.

I might just point out what we mean by columbaria and garden-type niches for those of you who are probably new to the committee and do not understand.

Columbaria are buildings which are used for inurned cremated remains. Garden niches are generally about 3 by 3 feet and are used for the in ground burial of cremated remains. We use the same monument that we use on regular burials. We are using that garden niche concept in California in cemeteries that are closed because they do not have full size burial space. We were able to utilize space that heretofore we were not able to use for casketed burials. This has given us an opportunity on the west coast and in Hawaii to lengthen the life of our cemeteries.

I think that the matter relative to our open cemeteries, the needs that we have are explained throughout in the document we have presented to you, so I will not read all of it as I am sure that each of the committee members have had an opportunity to read over what we have presented. There may be questions in there that you may have and perhaps we can leave the rest to questions that might be of interest to each individual member or to any of the participants in this hearing.

[The statement of Paul T. Bannai appears at p. 38.]

Mr. SHELBY. Your statement indicates that the VA makes every effort to expand existing national cemeteries and to extend their

longevity. How many of your VA cemeteries do you expect to close during the next 5 years?

Mr. BANNAI. Within the next 5 years, 11 cemeteries are projected to close because of the inability to expand. Those cemeteries are at Alexandria, La. and Barrancas, Fla., where we may be getting some additional land from the Navy, but not a sufficient amount to take care of all of their needs; Fayetteville, Ark., Little Rock, Ark., Memphis, Tenn., Natchez, Miss., the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, which is the Punchbowl in Hawaii, will be out of casketed interment space in about 2 years.

New Bern, N.C., Port Hudson, La., Wilmington, N.C., and up in Milwaukee, The Wood, Wis., National Cemetery. We have been granted a small amount of additional space at Wood from the VA Medical Center, but that will only last at the present interment rate about 3 to 5 years. That is a brief summary of the 11 cemeteries which will be closing.

Mr. SHELBY. Also in your statement you say that you anticipate that burials in the national cemeteries will be increasing steadily and by the year 2000, which is about 17 years from now, yearly interments will have increased by over 30 percent.

Will the cemeteries now in being and those planned be sufficient to provide the projected burials?

Mr. BANNAI. We anticipate the burials to increase because the age of the veteran is increasing each year, until about the year 2000. There may be a decrease after the year 2000.

As far as the interments in our particular national cemeteries go, it depends upon the availability of space accessible to the veterans and their families. In other words, we find that when a national cemetery closes in an area of high population density and the next-of-kin has to travel too far to a national cemetery they will choose a private cemetery. So it depends upon a great deal on where the VA establishes new cemeteries.

Mr. SHELBY. How many grant-supported State cemeteries are now open for interments?

Mr. BANNAI. You mean the State——

Mr. SHELBY. A grant-supported State cemetery, where they are supported by Federal grants.

Mr. BANNAI. There have been 11 grants to State cemeteries. There were 2,297 interments in State cemeteries in 1982.

Mr. SHELBY. Would you consider that a pretty good record?

Mr. BANNAI. I would say it is. We would like to see more State cemeteries established under the grant program. But I believe there are States that have constraints fiscally. The budgetary process that takes place in each State in order to make matching funds available takes several years. This is one reason why we are proposing legislation to extend the State grant program another 5 years.

This program has started to expand but it takes many years for the States to go through the legislative process, the budgetary process, land acquisition, and so forth. These are things that all governments necessarily must go through to establish any kind of a Government facility. So with the additional interest that we are getting, I feel that the extension is necessary.

Mr. SHELBY. Do you feel that a yearly appropriation of $5 million will be adequate for the next 5 years?

Mr. BANNAI. I think so, but the submitted legislative proposal does include a deletion of the $5 million yearly appropriation funding limit. Additional funding may be necessary in future years as construction costs and demand escalate.

Mr. SHELBY. If you have any, would you provide some examples of how the legislative proposal to provide authority to make contributions for construction projects on land that is adjacent to—that would facilitate safe ingress and egress to national cemeteries, would that be used and can you explain how?

Mr. BANNAI. The Quantico National Cemetery, which we are going to dedicate on the 15th of May fronts on to a two-lane county road. It is dangerous as we do not have adequate access space to the entrance of the cemetery. We also need a traffic light there.

Other examples where we would need either lights or roads that would turn into the cemetery are at Calverton, N.Y., and at Houston, and Fort Sam Houston Tex., National Cemeteries. I have been to each one of these cemeteries and if we could have the legislation passed, it would make it much safer and serve our veterans in a much better manner. The VA Department of Medicine and Surgery has similar legislative authority for their facilities.

Mr. SHELBY. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a couple of questions, Mr. Bannai. Could you explain the procedure by which matching grants are made? For instance, how much money can be allocated in a particular fiscal year to the various States?

Mr. BANNAI. No State can receive more than 20 percent of the total grant funding available for any given year. The State provides 50 percent and the Federal Government 50 percent. No more than half of the 50 percent State contribution can be derived from contributed State land.

We have given grants for numerous items. Some State cemeteries have put in their service complex with grant assistance. Some cemeteries have put in an administration building. I can think of one or two instances where we have even funded with matching grants a chapel for the State cemetery.

We have to review each of the items separately to determine how much grant funding can be authorized.

Mr. SMITH. On page 5 of your testimony you state that 24 additional States have expressed interest in the Federal-State matching program. Your testimony also indicates that these States plan to submit applications for Federal assistance.

Can you tell us the amount of money that would be involved, the years that would be covered, and whether or not you consider the plans of these States to be firm?

Mr. BANNAI. I would like to perhaps furnish that for the record. The reason is we can update it for you. For instance, we have made a grant to Guam, and I don't know the exact status of that. That was over a million dollars.

It probably would be better to give you that for the record, so we can bring that up to date for you.

Mr. SMITH. Could you also send a copy of that directly to my office?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that.

[The material referred to follows:]

STATE CEMETERY GRANT PROGRAM POTENTIAL FUNDING DEMAND

[In thousands of dollars]

State	Year funding anticipated	Estimated cost [1]
1. Delaware	1983	600
2. New Jersey	1983	600
3. Arkansas	1984	600
4. Indiana	1984	600
5. Mississippi	1984	600
6. Montana	1984	600
7. Nevada	1984	600
8. New Hampshire	1984	600
9. New York	1984	600
10. North Carolina	1984	600
11. Pennsylvania	1984	600
12. Tennessee	1984	600
13. Texas	1984	600
14. Utah	1984	600
15. Virginia	1984	600
16. West Virginia	1984	600
17. Wisconsin	1984	600
18. Missouri	1985	600
19. Oklahoma	1985	600
20. New Mexico	1986	600
21. Georgia	(2)	600
22. North Dakota	(2)	600
23. South Carolina	(2)	600
24. Washington	(2)	600
Total		14,400

[1] Since these States have only expressed interest, there is not sufficient information at this time to develop specific estimates by State. Past grants have ranged from $70,000 to $1,600,000. For budget purposes an average of $600,000 per State is being used.
[2] Unknown.

Mr. SMITH. Your testimony indicates that columbaria is expensive and costs $125 per niche. Is that really expensive compared to the cost of grave sites for casket burials, and how does it compare to the cost of garden niches?

Mr. BANNAI. The $125 per niche is higher than the cost of developing a gravesite. The garden niche concept is even less expensive because we use already owned land under trees, along pathways, roadways, and along fence lines—plots that are not large enough for casketed burials. We can use those areas in our cemeteries for cremated remains as each cremation plot requires only 3 feet by 3 feet of space. As a result, it is much less expensive to use land that we already have there, rather than building a structure which will, of course, cost a lot more money.

Mr. SMITH. Is it that much less expensive?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes. For example, the Los Angeles National Cemetery has one of our oldest columbariums and it has been completely filled. We are now going to in-ground interments of cremations and it is working out very well because the land is available there. As I say, this is not excess land but it is open land within the ceme-

tery—something that we never were able to use before for casketed interments.

Mr. SMITH. The various veteran organizations have had resolutions, and the VFW has affixed one of their resolutions to their testimony, calling for at least one open national cemetery in every State. Could you comment on that concept?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, as far as my personal opinion, it probably would be a good idea to have an open veterans cemetery in each State—either a National or State Cemetery. I think we ought to look at where the veterans are that you want to serve. With the State grant program, the States have an option of building their own cemetery.

For instance, a State such as Wyoming, where groundbreaking for a State cemetery will take place next month, has a small veteran population and a State cemetery under the State cemetery grant program is more economical. In developing any new cemetery we always consider the veteran population density and shifts in population trends such as in Florida. Florida was not designated as one of the 10 regional cemeteries, but there are many veterans who are moving to Florida, and they are going to stay there. As a result the need for a cemetery site is much greater than other areas.

Mr. SMITH. Do you feel the regionalization plan is working?

Mr. BANNAI. To some degree. Where these cemeteries are located in areas where the population density of veterans is great, it works very well. But again, I question whether some of the regional cemetery locations are close enough to population centers to serve the needs of those veterans. One hundred miles is about as far as the next of kin wants to travel.

Mr. SMITH. Just one additional question.

On page 2 of your testimony you project 66,000 burials by the year 2000. In reading over the VFW testimony on page 4, they put the estimate at 100,000.

Can you explain the difference in these two estimates?

Mr. BANNAI. I think that our figures are based upon what we are doing now and what we anticipate, where the cemeteries are currently located. Our estimates have been higher but changes in the overall veteran population count as well as a lowering in the veteran death rate has resulted in a revised projection of 66,000 for that particular year.

Mr. SMITH. They do note that they think that is a low estimate, so I guess we will have to wait for their testimony.

Thank you very much for your answers.

Mr. SHELBY. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia, Mr. Mollohan.

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, the Grafton National Cemetery is located in Grafton, W. Va. That's in Taylor County, in my congressional district. It is actually the county where I spent the first 3 years of my life, although I now live in an adjacent county. I am very familiar with the area and I am very familiar with the cemetery.

This cemetery, Mr. Chairman, is now filled to capacity. However, there is adjacent land available, and there is a great desire on the part of our West Virginia veterans to be buried in their home State

and as close to home as possible, so there is a great interest in expanding this cemetery.

Indeed, the West Virginia United Veterans National Cemetery Committee has been formed for the specific purpose of achieving this result. The organization's current president is Mr. Ralph Hartman and we have some very active members—one of the most active being Mr. John Bennett. These two individuals have been in contact with the Veterans' Administration for quite some time in an effort to expand this cemetery.

Indeed, Mr. Bannai has been very cooperative, as have others in the Veterans' Administration, both by going out and visiting the site, reviewing it, and in his efforts to keep me briefed. I want to express my appreciation to him personally for his interest and his attention.

It goes without saying, Mr. Chairman, that I strongly support the expansion of this cemetery, and I addressed this subject in our March 21 hearing of the full committee. I asked that the Veterans' Administration detail for the committee what progress we are making in the process of moving toward acquiring the property, and the committee has received a response, directed to Chairman Montgomery, by the Veterans' Administration. The Veterans Administration's letter is dated April 6 and the committee received it on April 7.

In that letter the Administrator, Mr. Walters, expresses the Veterans' Administration's support for timely action on this project. Of course, I am particularly appreciative of that.

Mr. Chairman, I would just like to confirm with Mr. Bannai here, and for the record, the time table which Mr. Walters sets forth in his letter to attempt to achieve this result. The Veterans' Administration has awarded a contract to a firm to conduct the topographic study and site-boring. This information is necessary before a judgement as to the suitability of the land can be made. The contractor's report is scheduled for submission, as I understand it Mr. Bannai, by late April, 1983. If this report, Mr. Chairman, concludes that the land proposed for donation is suitable for burials, then there will be an architect-engineering report estimating costs of the project and the feasibility of the project based on those costs.

Assuming that the report is positive, the cost estimates are reasonable, and there are no environmental problems, the Administrator says that would bring us to a late June, 1983 date.

Once the land is donated or offered for donation to the VA, the process would take approximately 1 year. Assuming that all these time tables were met, Mr. Chairman, we would be looking at donating this property and the Veterans' Administration taking responsibility for it in the early part of 1985.

I would like to thank the Veterans' Administration for clearly delineating the time framework in which we are working, and I would like to restate my strong interest in and support for this undertaking and assure this committee it has the solid backing of our veterans back in West Virginia. They feel, assuming these reports are positive, that they can acquire the property and put it together and donate it to the Veterans' Administration very quickly.

Two things Mr. Chairman. First, I would like made a part of the record the letter from Mr. Walters which I have just been referencing.

Mr. SHELBY. Without objection, it will be made a part of the record.

[The letter appears at p. 49.]

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Second, I would like to ask that Mr. Ralph Hartman, who is chairman of the West Virginia United Veterans National Cemetery Committee, be permitted to submit for the record written testimony.

Mr. SHELBY. That will be so ordered. You will furnish the address and everything?

Mr. MOLLOHAN. Yes, indeed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The information appears at p. 50.]

Mr. SHELBY. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bannai, earlier this year we had a problem with drainage at our cemetery in the Nashville area. Would you bring us up to date on what has occurred there and what the situation is now?

Mr. BANNAI. As recently as yesterday, I spoke with the Nashville Cemetery personnel; and my deputy, Mr. Corrado, has gone down there with the express intent of immediately trying to do something to correct the situation and to have the situation not happen again.

We had a similar incident, I understand, at one of the other cemeteries, the Rock Island National Cemetery, which is very close to the Mississippi River.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. Is that the Rock Island Arsenal?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes; the report that is given to me, for Nashville is that since Easter weekend there has been approximately 4½ inches of rain. However, this past weekend was a very good weekend, without an abundance of moisture and with a lot of wind. It has started to dry out.

The contractor has been working to bring soil in there, to level it, compact it, and bring in additional sodding. About 45 percent of the work has been completed. I think we are progressing very well.

In order to determine if any other cemetery in that particular area is experiencing a similar situation, I was in both Corinth, Miss., and Memphis, Tenn., last weekend. Memphis has no drainage problem because of the level of the terrain.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. Last weekend? That's my home district.

Mr. BANNAI. Right.

Now, Corinth has the same kind of terrain as the cemetery in Nashville. So we have taken preventive measures in those areas, trying to only make interments in areas which we feel are high and will stay dry. We are on top of it, and from what I understand, within 1 week the media will be going in there again to look at what we have done. I think that their report will be a favorable one at that time.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. You're saying the problem in Nashville has been solved, and you are still working on the problem at the arsenal in Rock Island, Ill.?

Mr. BANNAI. No, that was several years ago. But we gained valuable experience and we used that experience in working on the Nashville problem.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. Mr. Bannai, I have another problem. As a member of this committee, I don't think I received the proper communications from your office. In fact, in our State, I was probably the third or fourth person, after my inquiries, to find out what was happening. I don't think that was appropriate and I have discussed that with the Administrator.

If you visit a cemetery in my district, I would like to know about it so perhaps I could be there and view it with you if there is a problem. It was particularly true at the Nashville Cemetery. I had a terrible communication problem and I could find more in the newspaper than I could from the Veterans' Administration as to what was going on.

Mr. BANNAI. Well, we apologize for that, Congressman. If there is any incident in any of our cemeteries, it is something that should be brought to the attention of the elected officials in those areas and we should try to communicate that. If there was anything that was amiss in our department in this particular instance, at least if you will accept my apologies, we will see that it doesn't happen again.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. It was a problem that was brought up to us. We had a problem of focusing on it in the first place. There were articles in the paper. I wrote and contacted the VA about it. I went down there and viewed it, and I do feel like it has been solved now and congratulate you on that being done so rapidly once we had focused on it. But I don't think it is appropriate for me to have to find out those things in ways other than direct communications, and I think as a member of this committee, with this problem I have asked about, I think that I should at least be one of the first or second to find out about it.

Mr. BANNAI. I appreciate that. We should be responsive to all committee members because we depend on all of you for the well-being of our cemetery system.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. One last question. Do I understand you favor the regional concept of cemeteries and would oppose having a regional cemetery in every State; is that correct?

Mr. BANNAI. No, I did not say that. The regional concept has worked reasonably well and we have only one regional cemetery yet to "open." That cemetery will be in Alabama.

With respect to one cemetery in every State, we would, if funds were made available and the necessary legislation passed, be bound by that legislative decision and would work in order to get one cemetery in each State. What I am saying is, in some of the States we should consider looking from the standpoint of whether or not a veterans cemetery in that State is necessary at this particular time.

There are several reasons for looking further into it. One, a regional cemetery may be supplying all the needs required. There may be a State cemetery already there. There may be several na-

tional cemeteries that are still open for interments in that area. So I think it would have to be done on the basis of the need in a particular area. I am not against the concept.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. If the information is already available, I would like to see, Mr. Chairman, a list of the cemeteries that have just been described nationally, what the capacity is, where we are now, what is designated as a regional or State, and what you project as the areas where the most veterans live, and then take that into consideration with your statement on page 3, that the "projected increase in burials, however, cannot be met with the existing cemetery system." We need to know where you're headed in terms of how you intend to meet the problem given those facts that I have just described. If we could, please have this for the record, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. Again, Mr. Bannai, can you furnish that material that the gentleman from Tennessee has requested?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes.

Mr. SHELBY. I think it would be helpful to all of us.

[Summary of the present and future staus of national cemeteries appears on p. 59.]

Mr. BANNAI. What you are interested in is whether the needs of the veteran in certain areas are being met, is that correct?

Mr. SUNDQUIST. I am interested in the entire United States, not just in my area. I'm talking about the whole country.

Mr. BANNAI. Right.

Mr. SHELBY. The whole projection.

Mr. SUNDQUIST. The whole projection. Because you state in here that we have a problem—on page 3, "the projected increase in burials, however, cannot be met with the exsiting cemetery system." I would like to know, State by State, where the national, where the regional cemeteries are, where the State cemeteries are, what the capacities are, where we are now, and what your plans are in the near future as to answering the problem you address on page 3.

Mr. BANNAI. I would be very happy to do that.

Mr. SHELBY. How long will it take you to do that?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, I imagine within 2 weeks we can provide the information.

Mr. SHELBY. If you will furnish that to the committee, then we will disseminate it to the members.

The Chair next recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to commend the Administrator, Mr. Walters, and Mr. Bannai, for their request that we make what appears to be necessary and needed amendments to title 38, and I also commend the chairman for introducing H.R. 2220 consistent with that and would like to go on record now in saying I would be very happy to co-sponsor that legislation, sir.

Mr. SHELBY. We would certainly like to add your name.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Bannai, if I might get a little provincial, are there any plans to open previously closed cemeteries, particularly the one in St. Petersburg, with regard to garden niches for cremated remains? This would allow for an additional number of burial sites down there.

Has that been looked into at all?

Mr. BANNAI. We would be happy to look into it. It has been very successful in the areas where we initiated that particular program.

We have opened four closed cemeteries under the garden niche concept in California, and we had a little publicity prior to the opening. It was started in June of last year, and the response was very good. I notice that some of the veterans organizations have also asked that we look at it on a nationwide basis. We will look into it very seriously.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I would appreciate that. Bay Pines is a beautiful facility. There is an awful lot of wide open spaces there, but I certainly would not hazard to say that any of that is necessarily available. But it seems to me that some of that space probably would be available, particularly for the garden niches which don't take up quite as much space.

Mr. BANNAI. We have made a note of it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Without any timetable being required, but if you could sort of keep me up-to-date on any progress towards that end, I would certainly appreciate it very much.

Mr. BANNAI. All right. We would be very happy to.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Now, sir, can you very briefly give me an idea of the usual time tables and costs dealing with cemetery sites that have already been started and those which are on the blueprint for the immediate future—not regarding specific sites right now, but in general.

Mr. BANNAI. Well, I think that your earlier statement took into consideration those dates that we have planned for Florida cemeteries. I would say that any other cemetery project that we have would not be dissimilar from that. There are certain procedures we have to go through, such as the engineering studies, the budgetary process, the review by other governmental agencies, the environmental impact report, things of this nature. As a result, I don't think that any cemetery that we would plan in the future would be any different from that schedule that you were given relative to the Withlacoochee site.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. So we are talking a 5-year period of time?

Mr. BANNAI. Approximately, yes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. There is no way that that can be pulled in and in any way——

Mr. BANNAI. We would like to shorten it as much as possible. For instance, maybe the construction timeframe can be reduced especially in Florida where we don't have to contend with the winter months.

In Florida, one of the reasons for the 5-year timeframe, as has probably been pointed out to you, is the fact that we have timing problems in the budgetary process. We can't put into the budget a realistic construction estimate until the master plan is completed. Once we have a completed a master plan we can then budget for the full construction cost but that will take a year.

We will surely try to condense the schedule. Whenever we get a cemetery project for either expansion, improvement, or to build a new cemetery, we always try to expedite it as much as we can so long as it is not detrimental to the project. If the Florida project can be finished any sooner, we will make every effort to do so.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I appreciate, Mr. Bannai, your kind comments referring to Florida and the great need down there.

Mr. BANNAI. But all cemeteries, as I say, would be under the same timeframe.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Yes, the same amount of time.

You impress me, based on our prior conversations and your testimony here, and what is on the official record, that you are convinced that Florida certainly needs this help.

Now, I am not clear about something. Of course, I am relatively new to this legislative process. I always worry about the word "politics" and get concerned about changes in administrations, which we don't anticipate for the next 6 years, at least. But in any case, the point is you always get concerned with changes in administration, which usually changes the administrations of particular agencies.

Is the Withlacoochee site—again, forgive me for being provincial—are we committed to that now? Is it on the drawing board, in black and white? Is it something that can change, or are we sort of fixed into it?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, you know, they say there are two things you can always be sure of—death and taxes. Opening cemeteries may not be. I really don't know.

If everything goes well—political changes of administration doesn't have that much of an impact. It is very difficult to change after the process has gotten underway. That may be one of the reasons why we take so long to get a cemetery open, because everything has to be deliberated. The moneys that we expend for each phase is looked at very closely, to see that we have the best product we can get for the taxpayers' money.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. In your opinion, you are saying you feel this has gotten to the point where the chances are very slim that there would be any changes?

Mr. BANNAI. Right. In other words, I am saying that with the donation of the land that has been identified we will be a lot further along. We are having a meeting on May the 2nd, I think, with the architect-engineer coming up from Florida, and we will learn a lot more about the suitability of the proposed site for cemeterial purposes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Is that going to be here or in Florida, sir?

Mr. BANNAI. We will meet up here with our construction people, my own staff and other interested parties.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Could someone maybe advise me of that meeting? I don't know whether it might be open, but is there a possibility of my at least attending?

Mr. BANNAI. We will give you the data on it. It will be more of a technical meeting relative to the usage of the land and things of this nature.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Well, I am a former engineer, so hopefully I could keep up with some of the technicalities.

Mr. BANNAI. Fine.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Bannai, for your very fine testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico, Mr. Richardson.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to commend you for this hearing, and I would like to add my name as a cosponsor of H.R. 2220.

I would like to ask Mr. Bannai, what is the VA's policy on restricting markers to flat markers?

Mr. BANNAI. You mean on the usage of them?

Mr. RICHARDSON. Yes.

Mr. BANNAI. We have adopted a policy in our national cemeteries for the use of flat markers, and those markers are generally bronze or granite. We only use the flat markers when we have a new section or where prior use dictates it. If we have upright markers, marble markers, we will continue to use them. Once a cemetery begins to use, say, a flat granite marker, generally we stay with that marker, or if it is a bronze marker, they will continue to be used for uniformity. Much of this is determined by the economics of the marker. If it is more economical we will convert new sections of cemeteries to flat markers. They are also much more economical to maintain.

Mr. RICHARDSON. In other words, you have a freedom-of-choice policy?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes, but if the decision is made to use a particular marker in that cemetery for uniformity, for the beauty of the cemetery, we will try to stay with that particular marker.

Mr. RICHARDSON. To your knowledge, how many cemeteries would have that freedom-of-choice policy?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, the cemeteries all have a freedom of choice. But what I am saying is, once we select a particular marker we will stay with that marker in that cemetery.

There are of course, some exceptions. We have some cemeteries with uprights as well as flat markers. But generally, when we make a decision on a particular cemetery that it will be a flat marker, we will stay with that selection.

Mr. RICHARDSON. I urge you to read the statement by one of the witnesses who will follow you, from the VFW. The statement they make is the VFW opposes the elimination of the upright headstones now furnished by the VA. The reason is that there are many parts of the country where, because of the ground being covered by deep snow during the winter, the survivors of veterans and cemetery personnel are unable to locate specific graves identified by flat markers.

This is a particular problem in my district. I come from northern New Mexico, Santa Fe, where we get snow and inclement weather besides the good weather that everyone knows we have. I would urge you to read the testimony of the VFW because it seems to me it makes a lot of sense.

While, I guess, we are all getting provincial with you, I would like to discuss something relating to my cemetery in Santa Fe. I understand that the last 13 acres are being developed which would take care of burials and expansion until the year 1997, which is not that far away. I wondered if the VA is doing anything to enact any policy beyond 1997.

Do you have any plans to expand beyond that, or is there any contingency plan?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes. If we were able to obtain land, either through donation or some other land contiguous or adjacent to that cemetery, we would consider expanding the cemetery. Those are the conditions that we would keep the cemetery open.

Mr. RICHARDSON. So after 1997 you don't anticipate there will be a problem in expanding that cemetery?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, there would be if we did not have available land.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Well, there is plenty of land available. It is just a question of——

Mr. BANNAI. If it is available and is usable for cemetery purposes. Now, if someone would donate that land to us, we would consider it very seriously.

Mr. RICHARDSON. But you have no specific contingency plan beyond the development of these 13 acres?

Mr. BANNAI. None right now.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Well, I may submit a letter to you for the record asking you for more specific details relating to your plans after 1997. It seems like a long time from now, but knowing my district, we have a very, very extensive veterans population. I have some statistics that show a very large Hispanic and Indian population, a very large percentage, which is a subject of great interest.

Mr. BANNAI. We would be happy to hear from you on the Santa Fe situation and any other concerns you may have on behalf of your constituents.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Thank you, Mr. Bannai.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Mica.

Mr. MICA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First I would like to ask, before I forget, unanimous consent that all members of the subcommittee have 24 hours or an appropriate time to submit statements for the record.

Mr. SHELBY. Without objection.

Mr. MICA. Also, I would like to associate myself with your opening comments and the comments of my colleague from Florida with regard to some of our needs in Florida.

I might add, I think every member of the full committee, possibly with the exception of a few of the newer members, know that there are 5,000 veterans a month moving into the State of Florida. I never let a hearing go by without saying that. But I wanted to point something out to you that your people gave me that I didn't know. I use that figure as a conservative figure, 5,000 a month. I have been here about 48, 50 months.

The interesting thing is—and I don't know as I have said this before in this committee—that is a net figure. They estimate that about 6,000 to 7,000 a month move to Florida, but because of deaths, the net figure is about 5,000. That points out the need—we're talking about a thousand a month. That points out the need even more so, not only the 5,000 for our health facilities and medical facilities and domiciliary care, but for cemeteries in our State.

Can you tell me, with regard to this Withlacoochee situation—you know, I think my colleague made a good point. I have been here under two administrations now and I have seen it all ready to move forward and all ready to move back, and maybe it was the administration; maybe it was just funding. But we seem to be going back and forth on this.

If the State of Florida sets aside land, are we ready to go forward on that?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, it makes it a lot easier. Because the reason why it has been delayed is primarily the unavailability of land. As you know, at one time—and it still may be under consideration—the cross-Florida barge canal was another parcel proposed. One group was saying we ought to have it there and another one was advocating Withlacoochee. Until we are able to say we have the land to proceed, you can understand that the Veterans' Administration has its hands tied. We can't make any progress until the land is donated to us.

We normally would not delay once we are told we have the land and we can proceed. I don't think the policies here in Washington had anything to do with the delay. The decision to proceed was made by the Administrator I think in 1978, wasn't it?

Mr. CORRADO. 1980, I believe.

Mr. BANNAI. It has taken several years to proceed with a cemetery in Florida——

Mr. MICA. A number of years.

Mr. BANNAI. Yes.

Mr. MICA. I might just add, with regard to intent, I have been here—this is my fifth year, and every year we have had a bill pending and we have had recommendations from every member of the Florida delegation I believe that supports legislation I introduced for a cemetery in Florida. We have had constant recommendations, all positive. For all I know, the chairman may eventually move to Florida and want to have a cemetery in Florida. But the idea is that we really have congressonal intent, and it has been longstanding.

I will make a pact here with my colleague from Florida. If I leave here before you do, let's keep this going and get all of the members of the Florida delegation to keep the pressure up because we really do have a need.

Mr. BANNAI. I don't know if you were here when I mentioned it, but with the donation of a specified parcel of land that we are able to identify, that we are having the architect engineer come up on May 2 for several days to meet with our construction people, our cemetery people, engineers and other people. With that step, I think you will see a movement toward resolution of putting a cemetery there, if the land is usable for a cemetery site. I am sure that through normal procedures we will have a cemetery down the line.

Mr. MICA. I thank you very much.

I just might close by saying that if you haven't been to Florida, you may wish to come down and look around, too, because you may end up a permanent resident there yourself, also.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. I would like to know what is the current situation at Fort Mitchell in Alabama. It has been approximately 7 years since we started talking about a cemetery in the southeast region, and I believe there has been indications that the construction of the Fort Mitchell National Cemetery in Alabama is supposed to begin in January 1985 and is scheduled for completion in July 1986.

Why has this taken so long and when is it really going to get on track?

Mr. BANNAI. We have the environmental impact report, but the transfer of the parcel to us is not yet completed—and as I indicated to your colleages from Florida, that until the land is officially transferred, we just can't proceed.

We have a schedule set up for the land acquisition, the master plan, things of this nature. At the present time we are awaiting action from the State, and when we get word on that we will be able to proceed.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

I appreciate your appearing before the committee today. Your comment and answers to questions have been well received and we look forward to working with you.

Mr. BANNAI. We thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. We look forward also to receiving this information that has been requested by the various members.

Mr. BANNAI. Yes. We will have that in order and submit it to you.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BANNAI. Thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next panelists are Mr. Magill of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Mr. Heilman of the Disabled American Veterans. I would like for you two to come up together and we will consider you as a panel, although I think you may have thought you would testify separately.

Mr. Magill, do you want to go ahead? Your written testimony will be submitted for the record, without objection, and if you will just briefly summarize orally what your testimony is, this will give us a little time for some questions.

STATEMENTS OF JAMES N. MAGILL, SPECIAL ASSISTANT, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES; AND JOHN F. HEILMAN, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

STATEMENT OF JAMES N. MAGILL

Mr. MAGILL. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the privilege to present the views of the VFW with respect to the national cemetery system as administered by the VA. For a number of years the VFW has been mandated by resolution to seek the establishment of a national cemetery in every State. We have also established this as a priority goal. Although there are still a number of States that either do not have a national cemetery, or one that can accept gravesites, we do note that progress is being made in establishing 1 large national cemetery in each of the 10 standard Federal regions.

We also note the Administrator still supports the need for a new national cemetery in the State of Florida and we hope this can become a reality soon.

With respect to the State cemetery grants program, we believe it is a program that should be continued; therefore, we support H.R. 2506.

We also support H.R. 2220. We understand it would have a minimal cost and, of course, provide for the safety of those people wishing to visit national cemeteries.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we believe that provision should be available in all of the national cemeteries to accommodate the remains of those veterans choosing cremation.

That concludes my statement.

[The statement of James N. Magill appears at p. 72.]

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. Heilman.

STATEMENT OF JOHN F. HEILMAN

Mr. HEILMAN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee.

I can be quite brief. The DAV does support the two pending bills, H.R. 2506, for the extension of authority with reference to the State veterans cemetery program, and H.R. 2220, providing authority for construction progress to facilitate safe ingress and egress.

As my statement indicates, the DAV as a position does believe that the long-term goal of the VA should be to provide at least one national cemetery in every State. We realize that there are constraints in terms of finances regarding this goal, and also the very real consideration regarding States with smaller veteran populations.

Yet we heard this morning Director Bannai indicate that the projections are the existing system cannot handle the burial needs of our country for veterans. Generally, we do believe that one national cemetery in each State is realistic. From our examination of the data, it indicates that there are some 19 States right now that either have no national cemeteries or the cemeteries they do have are closed, so there are many veterans in this country who cannot be buried in their own States. This, of course, hinders maintenance and visitation by survivors.

Along with this goal, of course, we do encourage the use of columbariums and garden niches as one means to provide for the burial needs of our veterans.

With regard to the remarks of Mr. Mollohan, let me say that I was talking this morning to Ralph Hartman, one of the coleaders of that veterans' commission down there, and he urged me to make reference to the intent of those West Virginia veterans to purchase land adjacent to the Grafton Cemetery and donate it for cemetery expansion.

We also encourage the VA to give serious consideration to this. West Virginia has a veteran population of about 239,000 veterans, and while that is small in comparison to some other States, the ratio of veterans per 1,000 civilian population is 122 per 1,000 civilians. That is a higher ratio than some 20 other States, including Texas and New York, large States. So West Virginia does have a

problem and we would encourage your committee to make sure the VA gives it serious consideration.

That completes my statement, Mr. Chairman. Let me congratulate you and the members of your subcommittee for the very fine attendance that you have had this morning.

[The statement of John F. Heilman appears at p. 80.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I only have one question to Mr. Magill.

On the estimates for the year 2000 of the number of burials that will be required in veteran cemeteries, you indicate that the numbers will be approximately 100,000, and even indicate that that may be low. Mr. Bannai indicated that he thought it would be somewhere around 66,000.

Could you comment on how you came to that conclusion?

Mr. MAGILL. Yes, sir, I can. We received that number from the VA a year ago last spring. We view that as a peak period. We think that is when it will reach its maximum, and I don't think just in 1 year the number should drop that much.

In answering your question, sir, again, we received the number from the VA last year and we gave the figure at testimony before this committee at that time.

Mr. SMITH. How long did the VA indicate that that 100,000 would prevail or would be——

Mr. MAGILL. I cannot answer that right now, sir. If you would want, I could supply it with some more information.[1]

Mr. SMITH. I would appreciate that, and I will check with the VA further to find out as to why they have revised theirs.

Thank you, and thank you both for your testimony.

Mr. SHELBY. The gentleman from Florida, Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have no questions. I commend these gentlemen for their fine testimony, not necessarily oral, but the written statement that is going to go into the record.

I am really moved by a particular statement here, which we are all aware of but I am not sure we give enough thought to. That is the first sentence of VFW Resolution No. 632: "Whereas, the burial benefit is the single monetary benefit that has been available to the entire 25.7 million population of war veterans." You know, that is really a good point. I have said, and I am convinced that all the members of this subcommittee and the members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in general believes, as I do, that the cost of war must not end with the end of war, that we have got to take care of those people who sacrified so much, and their families. When we stop to think about it, that is the one common denominator, because there are so many other benefits available such as education, disability and what not, which are not applicable to most veterans—even though they sometimes don't take advantage of them. But that one burial benefit is the one common denominator that will be applicable to every one of us, all veterans. It is a good point

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[1] See p. 79.

and I certainly concur in it, sir. I pledge to you everything I can possibly do consistent with that aim.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Before we adjourn, I want to assure my colleagues and the people here that we will be moving the two bills which we have been talking about and considering this morning, H.R. 2220 and H.R. 2506, at our subcommittee markup which is scheduled for April 28. We will mark up a clean bill at that time, and all members of the subcommittee will be given an opportunity to be cosponsors. We are going to try to move it fast.

We appreciate you coming today, and we appreciate your oral and your written testimony. Thank you.

The committee will be adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:20 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

98TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2220

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 21, 1983

Mr. SHELBY (by request) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by—

(a) adding at the end thereof the following new section:

"§ 1009. Contributions to local authorities

"The Administrator may make contributions to local authorities toward, or for, the construction of traffic controls, road improvements, or other devices adjacent to a national cemetery if considered necessary for safe ingress or egress.";

and

(b) inserting at the end of the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter:

"1009. Contributions to local authorities.".

SEC. 2. This Act shall become effective on the date of enactment.

[No. 14]

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Office of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20420

Veterans Administration

MARCH 25 1983

Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.
Speaker of the House
of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

There is transmitted herewith a draft bill, "To amend subsection 1008(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, to authorize to be appropriated such sums as deemed appropriate for fiscal year 1985 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years." Presently, subsection 1008(a)(2) authorizes the appropriation of $5,000,000 for fiscal year 1980 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years to fund the State cemetery grant program instituted by Public Law 95-476. In order to continue to implement the program, the draft bill would authorize appropriations to fund this program for fiscal year 1985 through fiscal year 1989. It is requested that the bill be referred to the appropriate committee and that it be favorably considered for enactment.

The Veterans Administration (VA) has made a continuous and aggressive effort to publicize the State cemetery grant program. Currently, 11 States have submitted 16 applications for Federal assistance in establishing, expanding or improving State veterans' cemeteries while an additional 24 States have expressed an interest in submitting applications. It is anticipated that the program will be fully utilized.

Section 1008 of title 38 makes it possible for the States and the Federal Government to share their mutual obligation toward meeting the burial needs of our Nation's veterans. The establishment of State veterans' cemeteries will complement those cemeteries already established or under construction in the National Cemetery System and will make it possible for every veteran, who so wishes, to be buried with his comrades-in-arms in a cemetery in his home State.

The total cost of the proposed 5-year extension would depend on the level of appropriation and the amount of State requested assistance.

2.

Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.

The VA believes that the extension of this program will be beneficial to veterans and the Nation. It is with this purpose in mind that we submit this legislation.

We are advised by the Office of Management and Budget that the enactment of this draft bill would be in accord with the program of the President.

Sincerely,

Harry N. Walters

HARRY N. WALTERS
Administrator

Enclosure

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a 5-year extension to permit States to apply for Federal aid in establishing, expanding or improving State veterans' cemeteries.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by —

adding at the end of the first sentence of subsection (a)(2) of section 1008 the following new sentence:

"There is also authorized to be appropriated such additional sums as shall be deemed appropriate for fiscal year 1985 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years for the purpose of the preceding sentence of this subsection (a)(2)."

SEC. 2. This Act shall become effective upon the date of enactment.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS OF A NEW DRAFT BILL

A BILL TO amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the present five fiscal years appropriation authorization contained therein for an additional five fiscal years.

Section 1

Section 1 of the bill would amend Chapter 24 of title 38 by adding to subsection (a)(2) of section 1008 an additional sentence which would authorize the appropriation of such additional sums as shall be deemed appropriate for fiscal year 1985 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years for the purpose of making grants under the State cemetery grant program instituted by Public Law 95-476.

Section 2

Under this section the amendments to Chapter 24 of title 38 would be effective on the date of enactment.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE DRAFT BILL

Changes in existing law made by the draft bill are shown as follows: (Existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets; new matter to be printed in italics is underlined; existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

TITLE 38 - UNITED STATES CODE

* * * * * * *

PART II GENERAL BENEFITS

* * * * * * *

CHAPTER 24 - NATIONAL CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS

* * * * * * *

§ 1008. Aid to States for establishment, expansion, and improvement of veterans' cemeteries

(a)(1) Subject to subsection (b) of this section, the Administrator may make grants to any State to assist such State in establishing, expanding, or improving veterans' cemeteries owned by such State. Any such grant may be made only upon submission of an application to the Administrator in such form and manner, and containing such information, as the Administrator may require.

(2) There is authorized to be appropriated $5,000,000 for fiscal year 1980 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years for the purpose of making grants under paragraph (1) of this subsection. (Added P.L. 95-476 § 202(b)(1).) <u>There is also authorized to be appropriated such additional sums as shall be deemed appropriate for fiscal year 1985 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years for the purposes of the preceding sentence of this subsection (a)(2).</u>

I

98TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2506

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a five-year extension to permit States to apply for Federal aid in establishing, expanding, or improving State veterans' cemeteries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 12, 1983

Mr. SHELBY (by request) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a five-year extension to permit States to apply for Federal aid in establishing, expanding, or improving State veterans' cemeteries.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end of the first sentence of subsection (a)(2) of section 1008 the following new sentence: "There is also authorized to be appropriated such additional sums as shall be deemed appropriate for fiscal year 1985 and for each of

the four succeeding fiscal years for the purpose of the preceding sentence of this subsection (a)(2).".

SEC. 2. This Act shall become effective upon the date of enactment.

[No. 12]

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Office of the
Administrator
of Veterans Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20420

Veterans
Administration

MARCH 10 1983

Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.
Speaker of the House
of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

There is transmitted herewith a draft bill, "To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress." It is requested that the bill be referred to the appropriate committee and that it be favorably considered for enactment.

The draft measure, which would amend title 38 by adding section 1009 to chapter 24, would authorize the Veterans Administration to make contributions to local authorities for the construction of traffic controls, road improvements or other devices adjacent to a national cemetery if considered necessary to facilitate safe ingress or egress.

It has become evident, in administering the national cemetery system, that specific statutory authorization is required in order to undertake the type of construction projects deemed necessary to improve safety conditions at the entrance to national cemeteries. Under current law, in the absence of express statutory authority, such requisite construction projects are generally prohibited as a result of the well-established rule which prohibits the Government's expenditure of appropriated funds for the permanent improvement of private property. Although exceptions to that rule have been recognized by the Comptroller General and have been applied by the Veterans Administration to justify a limited number of improvements to private property adjacent to national cemeteries, we believe a specific statutory authorization under which this Agency could assist localities in constructing such needed improvements would be a more satisfactory means of achieving these results. The proposed legislation, in our opinion, addresses and resolves these concerns.

2.

Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.

It should be noted that section 5008 of title 38, United States Code, with language identical to that proposed here, presently authorizes the Administrator to make contributions to local authorities for construction projects adjacent to Veterans Administration medical facilities if considered necessary for safe ingress or egress.

We believe it is incumbent upon the Veterans Administration to provide and maintain the safest conditions at our national cemeteries and, where necessary, to take reasonable steps to minimize or, if possible, eliminate dangers to visitors and cemetery employees. It is with this object in mind that we submit this legislation.

The enactment of the draft bill will result in an estimated cost of $500,000 over the first five fiscal years. A summary of the cost estimate by fiscal year follows:

Fiscal Year	Administrative Cost
1984	$100,000
1985	$100,000
1986	$100,000
1987	$100,000
1988	$100,000
Total	$500,000

We are advised by the Office of Management and Budget that there is no objection to the presentation of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

Harry N. Walters

HARRY N. WALTERS
Administrator

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by --

(a) adding at the end thereof the following new section:

"§1009. Contributions to local authorities.

"The Administrator may make contributions to local authorities toward, or for, the construction of traffic controls, road improvements, or other devices adjacent to a national cemetery if considered necessary for safe ingress or egress;" and

(b) inserting at the end of the table of sections at the beginning of such chapter --

"1009. Contributions to local authorities."

SEC. 2. This Act shall become effective on the date of enactment.

4

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE DRAFT BILL

Changes in existing law made by the draft bill are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter printed in italic, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE

* * * * * * *

Part II. General Benefits

* * * * * * *

Chapter 24 - National Cemetery and Memorials

* * * * * * *

§ 1009. Contributions to local authorities.

The Administrator may make contributions to local authorities toward, or for, the construction of traffic controls, road improvements, or other devices adjacent to a national cemetery if considered necessary for safe ingress or egress.

I

98TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1346

To provide for the establishment of a new national cemetery in the State of Florida.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 8, 1983

Mr. MICA (for himself, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. LEWIS of Florida, Mr. MACKAY, Mr. LEHMAN of Florida, Mr. HUTTO, Mr. FUQUA, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. YOUNG of Florida, Mr. FASCELL, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. IRELAND, and Mr. MCCOLLUM) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

---

A BILL

To provide for the establishment of a new national cemetery in the State of Florida.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs shall establish a new national cemetery in the State of Florida at a site to be determined by the Administrator. That cemetery shall be part of the National Cemetery System provided for under chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 2. The Administrator of Veterans' Affairs may acquire by purchase, gift (including donations from the State of

Florida or political subdivisions thereof), condemnation, transfer from other Federal agencies, or otherwise such additional lands as may be required for the establishment of the national cemetery authorized by the first section of this Act.

STATEMENT OF

PAUL T. BANNAI

CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 14, 1983

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:
On behalf of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Harry N. Walters, I thank you for the privilege to appear before the committee this morning.

Your letter of March 15, 1983 expresses interest in receiving current information on available grave space in existing national cemeteries; proposed expansion plans; the VA policy on columbaria for those cemeteries closed to ground burials; the state cemetery grants program; and the current status of six of our cemeteries that are under construction or undergoing expansion.

I will address each of the areas of interest in the order stated.

At present, there are 230,000 available gravesites in the developed areas of our existing national cemeteries. The undeveloped areas of those cemeteries have a potential additional yield of 3,500,000

gravesites. Those areas will be programmed for development, in increments, as the need arises to meet veterans' burial needs. An accumulated total of more than 1,600,000 interments have been made in national cemeteries throughout the system to date, using about 1,500,000 gravesites and more than 6,000 columbarium or garden type niches.

The VA national cemetery system consists of 107 operating national cemeteries located in 40 states and in Puerto Rico, and 31 individual soldiers' lots and plots. Of the 107 cemeteries, 55 are open to new interments and 43 of them will remain open well beyond the year 2000. While 52 national cemeteries are closed to new interments, interments continue to be made of family members in the same gravesite or in reserved gravesites.

The provision of grave space to meet veterans' burial needs is a continuous concern of the Veterans Administration. In FY 1982, 41,422 veterans and their dependents were buried in national cemeteries. We estimate 43,000 burials in FY 1983 and 44,500 in FY 1984. By 1990, we project 57,000 burials in national cemeteries, and by the year 2000, 66,000 burials.

The VA makes every effort to expand existing national cemeteries to provide additional grave space and extend the longevity of those cemeteries, wherever feasible. It is VA policy to acquire land for cemetery expansion either through donation by state or local governments, corporations, veterans' groups, or private citizens or through transfer of surplus federal land that is excess

to the user agency. The VA does not purchase such land from nonfederal sources. The donable land must be suitable for cemetery development and contiguous or adjacent to the cemetery. Biloxi National Cemetery in Mississippi; Lebanon and Camp Nelson National Cemeteries in Kentucky; Port Hudson National Cemetery in Louisiana; Salisbury National Cemetery in North Carolina; and Springfield National Cemetery in Missouri are some of the cemeteries that have been expanded.

The VA has achieved its objective of providing one large national cemetery for each of the ten standard federal regions and one for the Washington, D.C. area. This regional concept was adopted in 1974 to provide an equitable distribution of cemeteries in relation to burial requirements throughout the country and to avoid a costly, impractical, and nonessential proliferation of national cemeteries. The projected increase in burials, however, cannot be met within the existing cemetery system.

To increase the longevity of our national cemeteries, the VA planned the construction of columbaria at some of our cemeteries for the inurnment of cremated remains. The VA had one existing columbarium in its system, at the Los Angeles National Cemetery, and it was filled. Additional columbaria were constructed at Riverside, California; Willamette, Oregon; Bourne, Massachusetts;

Calverton, New York; and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Hawaii. Because of high construction costs, about $125 per niche, no other columbarium is planned.

As an efficient and cost effective alternative plan for the interment of cremated remains, the VA adopted the garden niche concept. Garden niches utilizing three-foot square plots may be emplaced in national cemeteries in plots that are too small to accommodate casketed remains and, wherever feasible, along the perimeter fences of the cemetery, on hills or along walkways. The adoption of unused cemetery land will extend the longevity of national cemeteries and reopen those cemeteries that have been closed to the interment of casketed remains. The reopening in June 1982 of four closed national cemeteries in California was made possible through the use of garden niches: Fort Rosecrans (San Diego), Golden Gate (San Bruno), Los Angeles, and San Francisco National Cemeteries.

With regard to our state cemetery grants program, title 38, United States Code, section 1008, authorizes the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to make grants to states on a 50-50 matching basis to assist the states in establishing, expanding, or improving state veterans' cemeteries. An appropriation of $5,000,000 for that purpose was authorized for FY 1980 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years, through FY 1984.

The VA has made a continuous and aggressive effort to publicize the program. So far, eleven states, including the territory of Guam, have submitted 16 applications for federal assistance in the cost of establishing, expanding or improving state veterans' cemeteries; 24 additional states have expressed interest and plan to submit applications for federal assistance. Funds totaling $6.3 million have been obligated in support of 13 applications, and ten grants totaling $4.1 million, have been awarded.

Title 38, United States Code, section 1008, makes it possible for the States and the federal government to share their mutual obligation toward meeting the burial needs of our Nation's veterans. The establishment of state veterans' cemeteries complements our national cemeteries and makes it possible for every veteran, who so wishes, to be buried in a cemetery in his or her home state.

On March 25, 1983, the Administrator of Veterans Affairs transmitted to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House a draft bill to extend the state cemetery grants program for additional funding for a five-year period through FY 1989.

Mr. Chairman, I will now address the cemeteries enumerated in your letter of March 15, 1983:

Fort Mitchell National Cemetery, Alabama, is the designated national cemetery for Standard Federal Region IV. The Environmental Impact Statement for the 380-acre cemetery has been completed. The master plan is scheduled for completion in October 1983. Phase 1 construction will begin in January 1985 and is scheduled for completion in July 1986.

The 675-acre Indiantown Gap National Cemetery (Standard Federal Region III), Pennsylvania, was opened for interments on September 20, 1982. Phase 1 development consisted of 37 acres of land along with related buildings, roads and utilities.

Quantico National Cemetery (Washington, D.C. area), Virginia, has a total area of 726 acres. The development of Phase 1 and 2 will provide about 50,000 gravesites and will include buildings, roads and utilities. The cemetery will be dedicated on May 15, 1983, with interments to start the following day, May 16.

Fort Custer National Cemetery (Standard Federal Region V), Michigan, has a total area of 770 acres. The former Department of the Army Fort Custer Post Cemetery, a 12-acre parcel, was transferred to the VA in May 1982. This post section of the Fort Custer National Cemetery opened for interments on June 1, 1982. Phase 1 construction bids for the new cemetery were received on February 24, 1983, and call for the development of 10,400 gravesites

and the construction of administrative and service buildings, roads and utilities. Phase 1 is scheduled for completion in June 1984.

The 740-acre Riverside National Cemetery (Standard Federal Region IX), California, opened for interments on November 11, 1978. To date, some 140 acres of land have been developed for cemetery purposes; about 14,000 interments have been accomplished.

Calverton National Cemetery (Standard Federal Region II), New York, has a total area of 902 acres. Calverton opened in September 1978 and is the most active cemetery in the national cemetery system. In FY 1982, 6,280 interments were made.

And now, Mr. Chairman, we come to the final item, the Administrator's proposed bill to provide authority to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to and facilitating safe ingress and egress to national cemeteries.

The bill provides that the Administrator may make contributions to local authorities toward or for the construction of traffic controls, road improvements, or other devices adjacent to a national cemetery if the Administrator considers such devices necessary for safe ingress to or egress from such cemetery. There is no existing statutory authority under which the Administrator of Veterans Affairs may negotiate or contract with states, counties, municipalities, private firms or private citizens for the purpose of making contributions to improve

public or private lands, roads or walks contiguous with or in the immediate vicinity of national cemeteries. This legislation would permit contributions or construction improvements for the benefit or greater good of the cemeteries. It would provide companion authority to the VA similar to the authority given to the Administrator under title 38, United States Code, section 5008 with respect to medical facilities.

The Administrator transmitted the draft bill along with his letter of March 10, 1983 to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

That concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you again, sir, on behalf of Harry N. Walters, Administrator of Veterans Affairs, for the opportunity to appear before you and your Subcommittee today.

8.

21-063 O—83——4

Office of General Counsel Washington D.C. 20420

Veterans Administration

In Reply Refer To: (025)

MAY 9 1983

Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Subcommittee on Housing
and Memorial Affairs
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are the responses to the questions posed in your letter of April 20, 1983.

If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

John P. Murphy

JOHN P. MURPHY
General Counsel

Enclosures

Question: 1. What is your position on H.R. 652, a bill to furnish a flag to drape the coffin of any deceased member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces who has completed 20 years of service for retirement purposes?

Answer: It is our position that, because flags are now issued in the case of most deceased members of Reserve components of the Armed Forces who are over age 60 with 20 years creditable service based on the authority of title 10, United States Code, it would be more appropriate to amend that title, rather than title 38.

Question: 2. How will the contracting out policies of OMB affect your operation?

Answer: It has been the policy of the Department of Memorial Affairs to contract for complete cemeterial operations or discrete functions of operations where the level of interment activity and cost effectiveness dictated. The cemetery operations that have been contracted to date have been contracted through the authority granted the Administrator in section 1004 of title 38 and not through OMB Circular A-76. While we have initiated several A-76 studies, none of these have been completed. Over the past year, eight small national cemeteries were converted to contract operations. The contractors have been providing excellent and cost effective service. Of the total 108 national cemeteries, 19 are currently operated on a contractual basis. We believe that our current contracting policy has had a positive effect on our operations.

Question: 3. In regard to the FY 1984 budget, will there be adequate funds to maintain our high level of cemetery operations?

Answer: We think that the FY 1984 budget contains adequate funding to continue a high level of cemetery operations. The FY 1984 budget includes an increase of $2.3 million and 22 average employment over the FY 1983 budget level. This increased funding and employment is sufficient to cover the opening of the new cemeteries at Quantico and Ft. Custer.

Question: 4. What are your plans, if any, for establishing a national cemetery in Northern California?

Answer: At present, we have no firm plans for establishment of such a cemetery, although we recognize that the veteran population in Northern California is increasing. We believe a more cost effective solution toward meeting the burial demands in that region should include consideration of establishing a State cemetery under the State Cemetery Grant Program in 38 U.S.C. § 1008.

Question: 5. What is the status of the Ft. Richardson land transfer in Alaska?

Answer: The Department of Army, Corps of Engineers, has been requested to relinquish the 19 acre post cemetery along with 20 contiguous acres to the Bureau of Land Management, Department of Interior, for direct transfer to the Veterans Administration. The Bureau, Eklutna, Inc., the State of Alaska and the City of Anchorage, have agreed to the transfer of this acreage to the VA. Upon completion of the transfer, the post cemetery will be operated as a national cemetery.

Office of the
Administrator
of Veterans Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20420

Veterans
Administration APR 07 1983

APRIL 6 - 1983

APR 8 1983

Honorable G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to respond, as requested in your letter of March 21, 1983, to the question posed by the Honorable Alan B. Mollohan on the expansion and reopening of Grafton National Cemetery in West Virginia. Mr. Mollohan believes that the required process and procedures can be expedited and asks: "Assuming the land in question is turned over to the VA, what is the earliest date the VA can get on with this project?"

The VA is moving ahead as quickly as possible with the plan to expand the Grafton National Cemetery. If the estimated timetables for the required actions are met, the cemetery should reopen for interments in early 1985.

Brackenridge and Associates, Inc., of Lewisburg, West Virginia, was awarded the "Topographic and Site Boring Data" contract and started work on February 4, 1983, to determine the suitability of the expansion parcel for burial purposes. The contractor's report is scheduled for submission by late April 1983. If the report concludes that the land proposed for donation is suitable for burials, we will then have an Architect/Engineer prepare cost estimates for the development of the land. If the land is suitable, the cost estimates reasonable, and there are no environmental problems, we would be pleased to accept a proposed donation of the acreage. This would bring us to late June 1983.

Land offered to the government as a donation or transfer of federal excess property must be cleared with the Department of Justice, a process that takes six months to one year. In the meantime, we would be preparing working drawings and bid documents. Assuming that the timetables are met, the development should be ready for use within nine to twelve months, which would put us in the early 1985 time frame.

I trust the foregoing information will be of assistance to Mr. Mollohan.

Sincerely,

Everett Rogers / Deputy Administrator - For

HARRY N. WALTERS
Administrator

WEST VIRGINIA UNITED VETERANS NATIONAL
CEMETERY COMMITTEE

April 25, 1983

Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Veterans Affairs Sub Committee on
Housing and Memorial Affairs
337 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Shelby:

On behalf of the West Virginia United Veterans National Cemetery Committee and some 235,000 living veterans, their wives, and children of West Virginia, I appreciate the opportunity to present some additional testimony to your committee.

The following documents are attached as a part of my testimony:

A. News article from the Charleston Daily mail, May 29, 1978. (We feel this article and picture demonstrate the dedication our veterans and the citizens of Grafton have shown for the past 114 years. As pointed out in the article, our cemetery has been closed to new applicants for over 22 years.)

B. Copy of Senate concurrent resolution No. 27: (passed unanmiously, this resolution verified the total support of the West Virginia Legislature).

C. Copy of facts surrounding the reopening of the Grafton Cemetery in 1979 and reversal of the decision in early 1980. (The committee felt very stronly that the unknown Civil War soldiers resting in one monument would receive more honor and respect by visitors and ceremonies at the Grafton National Cemetery).

D. A report of the final death toll of the Indo-China War. (This report shows West Virginia's patriotic committment to our nations call for help in time of war. Not only in this war but the records show that the yound men and women of West Virginia have answered the roll in a larger percentage per capita than any other state in our country).

The committee voted to raise the necessary funds to purchase additional land needed to reopen and expand the Grafton National Cemetery. We propose to donate this land to the Veterans Administration for this purpose.

Mr. Chairman, the most difficult thing I have ever had to do was to tell a dying friend and fellow veteran there was no space available for him in a National cemetery. It would seem to me that a 5' x 10' plot of land is a small price to pay for service rendered when our nation called.

Mr. Chairman, the West Virginia United Veterans National Cemetery Committee thanks you for this opportunity to present this testimony, and also to thank you and members of the committee for your support in our endeavor to reopen the Grafton National Cemetery.

Sincerely,

Ralph L. Hartman, Chairman
West Virginia United Veterans
National Cemetery Committee
Route 4 Box 268
Keyser, West Virginia 26726

State of West Virginia

CERTIFICATE

I, TODD C. WILLIS, Clerk of the Senate of West Virginia do hereby certify that the following and hereto attached instrument is a true and perfect copy of SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 27, Urging the Veterans Administration to reopen the national cemetery at Grafton, West Virginia.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Senate this thirteenth day of March 19 80

Todd C. Willis
Clerk of the Senate

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 27

(By: Mr. Tonkovich, Mr. Rollins, Mr. Steptoe, Mr. Fanning, Mr. Susman, Mr. Harman, Mr. McGraw, Mr. Sharpe, Mr. Williams, Mr. Gilligan, Mr. Colombo, Mr. Hinkle, Mr. Gainer, Mr. Boettner and Miss Herndon).

Urging the Veterans Administration to reopen the national cemetery at Grafton, West Virginia.

WHEREAS, The United Veterans Committee of West Virginia organized and composed of every major veteran organization including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans of World War I, Disabled American Veterans, Retired Officers Association and the Military Order of the Purple Heart has initiated action toward the reopening of West Virginia's only national cemetery at Grafton; and

WHEREAS, The national cemetery at Grafton has served for over one hundred years as West Virginia's patriotic focal point for memorial services honoring the heroic dead, and

WHEREAS, The United Veterans National Cemetery Committee has met the basic criteria of the Veteran's Administration and has worked closely with the Veteran's Administration for the past two years on the reopening of the national cemetery; and

WHEREAS, The Veteran's Administration has requested an impact study before the national cemetery is reopened instead of recommending the immediate reopening of the cemetery;

WHEREAS, The delay in the impact study will deny approximately two hundred seventy-five thousand West Virginians the privilege of being buried in West Virginia soil in a reverent and hallowed military grave; and

WHEREAS, The United Veterans National Cemetery Committee has received endorsement of their goal of the immediate reopening of the national cemetery from Governor Rockefeller, Senator Byrd, Senator Randolph, Congressman Mollohan, Congressman Staggers, Congressman Slack and Congressman Rahall; therefore, be it

Resolved by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That the national cemetery at Grafton be ordered reopened immediately pursuant to Chapter twenty-four, Title thirty-eight of the United States Code Annotated; and, be it

Resolved further, That the Clerk is hereby directed to forward a copy of this resolution to President Carter.

WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS NATIONAL CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Executive Officers of the Committee, representing the following West Virginia Veterans Organizations, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Mountaineer Retired Officers Association, Order of the Purple Heart, Veterans of World War I, met on July 15, 1980 regarding the recent reversal of it's position to reopen the Grafton National Cemetery taken by the Veterans Administration.

It is a matter of record that this Committee represents the over 200,000 veterans in the State of West Virginia and was responsible for the positive action taken by the VA to reopen the Cemetery. Further, that the VA reversed its decision without coordinating or communicating with any member of the Committee even though the Committee's action had the wholehearted written support of West Virginia's Congressional delegation, it's Governor, and the West Virginia Legislature that passed a concurrent resolution supporting this project in its entirety (copy enclosed).

It is also a matter of record that the W.V.U.V.N.C.C. has been in communication with the VA since it undertook this project and has followed, to the letter, every request made of it in order to accomplish its expansion goals. For example, a public hearing of the citizens of Grafton was required. After due and proper notice, a public hearing was held at the Taylor County Courthouse on November 9, 1979. The assigned chambers were too small for the group and larger chambers were utilized. Interested citizens, veterans, government officials met with Cemetery Committee representatives and a VA spokesman. Brief statements were made and comments and questions were invited. After very careful, honest and forthright dialog, a vote on the project was taken and except for one lady, the vote was unanimous for exhuming any remains and/or artifacts which will be individually encased to become an integral element in the composite memorial erected and dedicated to the "Unknown", symbolic through a marble arch structure reflecting the unification of the North and South as a Union.

It is a fact, that even with the unfair publicity, generated mostly by out of state news reporters, that virtually no opposition has been generated by West Virginians. This is probably because they know that the unknowns in this Cemetery had been buried and moved after 2-6 years to the present site, and after 113 years, there are no remains of the body. Further, since they were the first reburied in 1867, they lay at the lower portion of the Cemetery and are seldom visited. The new memorial to them will be centrally located within the Cemetery and will receive proper respect.

For the record, the Grafton National Cemetery is the oldest in the United States. The original Memorial Day (Decoration Day) was first held here in 1867 and has been conducted without exception every year since. Also, without exception, every West Virginia Governor, including John D. Rockefeller IV, present Governor, have spoken at this ceremony at least once during their term.

It is the concensus of the Veterans of West Virginia that the Grafton National Cemetery must be reopened and expanded with haste. That the Veterans Administration is obligated to work with the W.V.U.V.N.C.C. on the method and timing of accomplishing this goal. The Grafton National Cemetery is a National Historical Place. It has been revered by West Virginians since it opened over 113 years ago by veterans and non-veterans alike. The Veterans Administration is to be commended for its regional concept of providing beautiful burial grounds for the millions of veterans throughout the United States who have earned the right to such burial.

However, not a single Veteran in the State of West Virginia is desirous to be buried at Indian Town Gap, Pennsylvania. Let it be recorded that they desire, above all else, to be laid to final rest at their beloved Grafton National Cemetery.

Signed:

Charles W. Albright, President

John F. Bennett, Vice President

Charles E. Allard, Secretary-Treasurer

Roland Savilla, Ex-Officio Member, UVNCCommittee and Director, WV Department of Veteran Affairs

Enclosure

CASUALTIES, STATE BY STATE

	Deaths	Death per 100,000 Population
Alabama	1,179	33.6
Alaska	54	16.6
Arizona	599	30.8
Arkansas	575	29.1
California	5,398	26.4
Colorado	59	25.3
Connecticut	583	18.9
Delaware	119	21.1
District of Columbia	235	31.4
Florida	1,886	26.0
Georgia	1,537	32.6
Hawaii	270	33.4
Idaho	204	27.0
Illinois	2,858	25.4
Indiana	1,496	28.3
Iowa	808	28.0
Kansas	599	26.5
Kentucky	1,032	31.3
Louisiana	863	23.2
Maine	328	31.9
Maryland	984	24.3
Massachusetts	1,290	22.3
Michigan	2,584	28.5
Minnesota	1,034	26.5
Mississippi	626	27.7
Missouri	1,366	28.7
Montana	253	35.2
Nebraska	383	25.1
Nevada	141	26.8
New Hampshire	216	28.0
New Jersey	1,428	19.4
New Mexico	389	36.5
New York	4,002	21.8
North Carolina	1,554	29.8
North Dakota	187	29.6
Ohio	2,999	27.8
Oklahoma	965	36.6
Oregon	678	31.1
Pennsylvania	3,045	25.5
Rhode Island	199	20.6
South Carolina	875	32.8
South Dakota	186	27.4
Tennessee	1,261	31.3
Texas	3,292	28.3
Utah	344	30.6
Vermont	98	21.2
Virginia	1,259	26.4
Washington	1,004	29.2
West Virginia	711	39.9
Wisconsin	1,128	25.0
Wyoming	116	33.6

NOTE: Population is U. S. Census Bureau estimate for mid-1972.

[From the Charleston (W. Va.) Daily Mail, Monday, May 29, 1978]

VETERANS MOUNT DRIVE TO EXPAND STATE CEMETERY

(By Bill Byrd)

GRAFTON.—It's peaceful scene—rolling green hills, shade trees rustling in the breeze, a large American flag waving gently under a blue sky.

Beneath those verdant hills lay 2,111 of our nation's war dead—more than 1,200 Union and Confederate troops from the Civil War, some from the Spanish-American War; the rest from every war our nation has fought in this century. More than 600, many of them Civil War veterans, are unknown soldiers.

For nearly two decades, the cemetery—the state's only national cemetery—has been filled. Now veterans' organizations throughout the state are banding together to obtain land to expand it, adding a new chapter to the cemetery's rich 110-year history.

Built in 1867 shortly after the Civil War, the cemetery will be the site at 11 a.m. Tuesday of the state's official Memorial Day ceremonies. Secretary of State A. James Manchin's speech will be carried live over a statewide radio network.

Taylor County's schoolchildren will march to the cemetery, dressed in white and carrying flowers to decorate the graves. It's a tradition of respect for the nation's war dead that has been followed for 109 years.

Respect also motivates the new campaign to enlarge the cemetery.

Spearheading that campaign is the United National Cemetery Committee, headed by Dr. Charles W. Albright of South Charleston, an Army Air Corps veteran from World War II.

"I just don't think it's right. West Virginia has 235,000 living veterans, 8,000 of whom are World War I vets whose average age is now 82," he said in his South Charleston home last week.

Retired from Union Carbide where he helped pioneer coal conversion technology during a career as a chemist, Albright was born in Grafton. Like many state veterans, he first discovered that the cemetery was closed when he made inquiries about being buried there.

"For a state this small, with so many veterans among its population who have served this country, there should be funds available to expand the cemetery," he says. The veterans are closely following a bill (S. B. 1556) introduced by Sen. Jennings Randolph, chairman of the Senate Veterans Committee, that would split the cost of developing new cemeteries between states and the federal government.

Hearings on the bill are scheduled for June 15, an aide to Sen. Randolph said.

Per capita, the state lost more men in the Vietnam war than any other state, Albright said. And the state also has more veterans on a percentage basis per capita, his research into official statistics shows.

The committee plans to ask the state Department of Veterans Affairs to find how many veterans would be interested in burial in a national cemetery. The survey would be similar to one the agency did to determine interest in the state Veterans Home which was funded recently by the legislature.

The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of World War I, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the Retired Officers Association are represented on the committee.

"We stopped taking reservations for burial plots back in 1961," cemetery superintendent Leonard White tells veterans who call and ask about being buried there.

Only 53 plots remain unfilled and they have been reserved since that time. If one of those reservations is cancelled, a "first-come, first-served" rule is followed. The Veterans Administration which now controls the cemetery does not have a reservation policy.

"I've been getting between 15 to 20 inquiries a month. They seem to be on the increase," White noted. Unless one of those with a reservation has chosen to be buried elsewhere, he directs callers to National Cemeteries outside the state that still have burial space.

Part of the attractiveness of burial in a national cemetery lies in the cost. The only charge borne by the veteran's family is the funeral expense.

There is no charge for the plot. His spouse can be buried with him, if she does not remarry. Dependent children are also eligible for burial and the VA pays for the headstone and the cost of grave care.

Spokesmen for the Veterans Administration say the federal agency has gone to a concept of regional cemeteries to meet the needs of the approximately 14 percent of the nation's veterans who elect to be buried in a National Cemetery.

Funding has been approved by Congress for 11 new cemeteries. Construction and design is already underway at Quantico, Va.; Indiantown Gap, Pa.; Calverton, N.Y.; Riverside, Calif.; and Bourne, Mass. Other sites chosen by the VA for new cemeteries are: Portland, Ore.; St. Louis, Mo.; Denver, Colo.; and Houston, Texas.

Sites still have to be selected for the remaining two cemeteries to serve the states in Region IV—Georgia, Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Mississippi—and those in Region V: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Leroy Walker of the VA's National Cemetery Department cites the example of veterans in Virginia who pooled money to purchase several acres of land adjacent to the once-closed Culpeper National Cemetery. The property was then donated to the government, allowing the cemetery to be reopened.

The VA would be more than willing he said, to accept a similar purchase of land "contiguous" to the Grafton cemetery. By contiguous, he explained, any cemetery expansion would have to be close enough to be taken care of by the lone cemetery superintendent—otherwise, he said, "You run into the problem of duplicating expenses for machinery, payroll, and other costs."

The veterans committee is hoping that unused land owned by the state near the correctional school for boys located about four miles away in Pruntytown will be approved by the VA as an "annex" to the Grafton cemetery.

Failing that, a fund-raising drive may be started to purchase the developed property adjacent to the Grafton cemetery, Albright and others on the committee indicated.

SUMMARY

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

The following pages provide the current and future (yr 2000) status of the National Cemetery System by State.

There are presently 20 states that do not have an open national cemetery but in 6 of these states there exists a state veterans cemetery. The 14 states that currently have neither an open national cemetery nor a state veterans cemetery are: Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Of the 14 states that currently have neither a national nor a state cemetery, two (Alabama and Alaska) will be adding a national cemetery in the near future and of the remaining 12 states, ten have either applied or have expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program. Only two of the above (Idaho, and Vermont) are not currently interested in the State Cemetery Grant Program.

In 1982 there were 372,925 veteran deaths and burials in national cemeteries totalled 41,422. It is projected that by the year 2000 there will be 583,500 veteran deaths and that burials in national cemeteries will total 66,000.

By the year 2000 it is projected that 19 of the current open national cemeteries will close. It is expected that increased participation by states in the State Cemetery Grant Program will offset the loss of burial space created by the additional closed national cemeteries.

While this analysis covers burial capacity by state it should be noted that review of cemetery needs by standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA) is also a tool in localizing and scoping future demands that will be placed on the national cemetery system. By the year 2000 it is estimated that 44% of the veteran population will reside in the 35 largest SMSA's. Future cemetery planning would also include analyses of population trends before any addition/expansion decisions would be made.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Alabama	Mobile	Closed	...	9,461	No	The Ft. Mitchell Regional Cemetery scheduled to open in 1986 will meet interment needs well beyond the year 2000.
	Ft. Mitchell	...	75,000			
Alaska	Sitka	Closed	...	518	No	Funding is included in the FY 1984 Budget to operate the Ft. Richardson Post Cemetery (Anchorage) as a national cemetery - will meet interment needs well beyond 2000.
	Ft. Richardson	...	20,000			
Arizona	Prescott	Closed	...	10,437	Yes	Arizona has a State Veterans Cemetery which opened near Phoneix in 1979.
Arkansas	Fayetteville	248	...	6,652	No	Fayetteville is projected to close in 1983 and Little Rock by 1987. Ft. Smith will be out of space by 2000. Arkansas has expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program, but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Ft. Smith	3,081	...			
	Little Rock	2,217	...			

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VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
California	Riverside	480,429	266,000	60,184	No	Riverside has capacity well beyond 2000. The four closed cemeteries are currently open for cremains under the garden niche concept. Highly populated Northern California does not have a cemetery open for casketed remains.
	Ft. Rosecrans	Closed	...			
	Golden Gate	Closed	...			
	Los Angeles	Closed	...			
	San Francisco	Closed	...			
Colorado	Ft. Logan	122,770	98,000	7,425	Yes	The Ft. Logan Regional Ceme. is located in the highly populated Denver area. Will provide for interments needs well beyond 2000.
	Ft. Lyon	51,000	50,000			
Connecticut	None	N/A	N/A	8,352	Yes *	* $600,000 has been obligated under the State Grant Program to establish a State veterans cemetery at Middletown, Conn.
Delaware	None	N/A	N/A	1,579	No	The closest open cemetery to Delaware residents is the Regional Ceme. at Indiantown Gap, PA. Delaware has expressed an interest in the State Grant Program.
Florida	Barrancas	3,632	...	44,845	No	The Florida National Cemetery is scheduled for completion in 1988. This cemetery will provide for burial space well beyond the year 2000.
	Bay Pines	Closed	...			
	St. Augustine	Closed	...			
	Florida	...	UNK			

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Georgia	Marietta	Closed	...	12,716	No	Georgia has expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
Hawaii	Nat. Mem. Ceme. of the Pacific	1,786	...	1,943	No	This cemetery will close in 1984. Hawaii has expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
Idaho	None	N/A	N/A	2,529	No	The closest open cemeteries are the regional cemeteries at Willamette, Oregon and Ft. Logan, Colorado. Idaho has not expressed an interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program.
Illinois	Alton	Closed	...	24,783	Yes	Four of the five open ceme. should be open well beyond the year 2000. A State cemetery is also located in Quincy. None of the open cemeteries are located reasonably close to the highly populated Chicago area.
	Camp Butler	11,801	4,900			
	Danville	5,271	4,700			
	Quincy	110	90			
	Rock Island	4,072	625			
	Mound City	1,073	260			
Indiana	Marion	8,142	7,000	13,015	No	Indiana has expressed interest in the State Grant Cemetery Program but no applications have been made to date.
	Crown Hill	Closed	...			
	New Albany	Closed	...			

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Iowa	Keokuk	9,555	8,400	6,794	Yes	Keokuk has sufficient capacity to remain open well beyond 2000.
Kansas	Ft. Scott	2,926	2,500	6,039	Yes	Both Ft. Scott and Leavenworth have sufficient capacity to remain open well beyond 2000.
	Leavenworth	68,705	34,400			
	Ft. Leavenworth	Closed	...			
Kentucky	Camp Nelson	7,412	2,700	8,478	No	Camp Nelson is expected to remain open well beyond 2000.
	Lebanon	Closed	...			
	Mill Springs	597	...			
	Cave Hill	Closed	...			
	Danville	Closed	...			
	Lexington	Closed	...			
	Zachary Taylor	Closed	...			
Louisiana	Alexandria	499	...	9,102	No	Alexandria is scheduled to close in 1985 - Port Hudson in 1987. Louisiana has not expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program.
	Port Hudson	719	...			
	Baton Rouge	Closed	...			
Maine	Togas	Closed	...	3,278	Yes	Approximately $200,000 has been awarded to Maine under the State Cemetery Grant Program.
Maryland	Annapolis	Closed	...	10,172	Yes	Although all three national cemeteries are closed Maryland is deeply involved in the State Cemetery Program. Five State Ceme. have been or are in the process of being built.
	Baltimore	Closed	...			
	Loudon Park	Closed	...			

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Massachusetts	Massachusetts	498,292	318,000	14,624	No	The Massachusetts Regional Cemetery has sufficient capacity to provide for burial needs well beyond 2000.
Michigan	Ft. Custer	...	413,000	20,604	No	The Ft. Custer Regional Cemetery scheduled to be opened in 1984 has sufficient capacity to provide for burial needs well beyond 2000.
Minnesota	Ft. Snelling	52,000	...	9,901	No	The Ft. Snelling National Cemetery is anticipated to close in 1996. Minnesota has not expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program.
Mississippi	Biloxi	2,737	1,100	5,533	No	Biloxi and Corinth have sufficient capacity to provide burial space beyond 2000. Natchez is expected to close in 1986.
	Corinth	24,200	23,600			
	Natchez	239	...			
Missouri	Jefferson Barracks	80,615	56,600	13,316	No	Jefferson Barracks, VA's fifth most active cemetery, has sufficient capacity to provide burial space well beyond 2000. Missouri has also expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Springfield	5,000	1,000			
	Jefferson City	Closed	...			

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Montana	None	N/A	N/A	2,069	No	Montana has expressed expressed in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
Nebraska	Ft. McPherson	5,435	3,400	3,690	Yes	Ft. McPherson has sufficient capacity to provide burial space well beyond 2000.
Nevada	None	N/A	N/A	3,269	No	Nevada has expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
New Hampshire	None	N/A	N/A	2,973	No	New Hampshire has expressed interest in the State Ceme. Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
New Jersey	Beverly Finn's Point	Closed Closed	... ...	18,898	No*	* New Jersey has a request in process for a grant under the State Cemetery Grant Program.
New Mexico	Fort Bayard Santa Fe	3,400 12,000	2,600 ...	3,456	No	Santa Fe will close by 1997. New Mexico has expressed interest in the State Ceme. Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
New York	Bath	1,622	...	35,723	No	Calverton, the most active national cemetery, has sufficient capacity to provide burial space well beyond 2000. Bath is expected to close by 1987. Calverton is close to the New York city population but is not close to the highly populated Northern New York. New York has expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Calverton	644,758	545,000			
	Long Island	Closed	...			
	Cypress Hills	Closed	...			
	Woodlawn	Closed	...			
North Carolina	New Bern	268	...	14,374	No	New Bern and Wilmington are expected to close this year. Raleigh and Salisbury are scheduled to close in 1991 and 1992 respectively. North Carolina has expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Raleigh	1,377	...			
	Salisbury	1,123	...			
	Wilmington	303	...			
North Dakota	None	N/A	N/A	1,241	No	North Dakota has expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
Ohio	Dayton	8,031	...	26,376	No	Dayton is expected to close in 1996. Ohio has not expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Oklahoma	Fort Gibson	5,670	4,700	8,393	No	Ft. Gibson has sufficient capacity to remain open well beyond 2000. Oklahoma has also expressed interest in the State Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
Oregon	White City Willamette Roseburg	38,000 39,000 Closed	34,000 4,700 ...	8,596	No	Willamette will close slightly beyond 2000. Oregon has not expressed interest in State Cemetery Grant Program.
Pennsylvania	Indiantown Gap Philadelphia	461,712 Closed	389,000 ...	33,332	Yes	Indiantown Gap has sufficient capacity to remain open well beyond 2000.
Rhode Island	None	N/A	N/A	2,650	Yes *	* Rhode Island has received a VA State Cemetery Grant totalling $710,000.
South Carolina	Beaufort Florence	6,158 Closed	3,300 ...	7,596	No	Beaufort has sufficient capacity to remain open well beyond 2000. South Carolina has also expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
South Dakota	Black Hills Fort Meade Hot Springs	82,130 Closed Closed	78,000	1,573	No	Black Hills has sufficient capacity to meet burial needs well beyond 2000.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Tennessee	Chattanooga	40,000	30,000	11,559	No	Memphis is anticipated to close in 1988 - Nashville in 1990. Tennessee has expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Memphis	3,971	...			
	Mountain Home	7,207	6,000			
	Nashville	5,373	...			
	Knoxville	Closed	...			
Texas	Ft. Bliss	28,628	11,900	36,388	No	Ft. Sam Houston is expected to close in 1999. The regional cemetery at Houston has sufficient capacity to remain open well beyond 2000. Texas has expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Ft. Sam Houston	14,353	...			
	Houston	102,500	82,000			
	Kerrville	Closed	...			
	San Antonio	Closed	...			
Utah	None	N/A	N/A	3,178	No *	* A request is in process for a $410,000 grant for a State veterans cemetery at Bluffdale, Utah.
Vermont	None	N/A	N/A	1,295	No	The closest national cemetery to Vermont residents is the Massachusetts Regional Cemetery. Vermont has not expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Virginia	Culpeper	6,016	1,500	13,072	No	Quantico has sufficient burial space to remain open well beyond 2000. Virginia has expressed an interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
	Quantico	...	145,000			
	Alexandria	Closed	...			
	Balls Bluff	Closed	...			
	Danville	Closed	...			
	Hampton (2 Ceme.)	Closed	...			
	Richmond Complex (6 Ceme.)	Closed	...			
	Staunton	Closed	...			
	Winchester	Closed	...			
Washington	None	N/A	N/A	12,830	Yes	The closest national cemetery to Washington residents is the Willammette Regional Cemetery in Portland, Oregon. Washington has expressed an interest in the State Ceme. Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
West Virginia	Grafton	Closed	...	5,053	No	The closest regional cemeteries to West Virginia residents are the Indiantown Gap, Pa. and Quantico, Va. Regional Cemeteries. West Virginia has expressed interest in the State Cemetery Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.

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VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

PRESENT AND FUTURE STATUS OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

State	National Cemeteries in State	Gravesite Capacity (includes undeveloped) 1982	2000	Est. Veterans Deaths in State (year 2000)	Open State Veterans Cemetery	Comments
Wisconsin	Wood	1,490	...	11,319	Yes	Wood is expected to close in 1985. Wisconsin has expressed interest in the State Ceme. Grant Program but no applications have been submitted to date.
Wyoming	None	N/A	N/A	1,158	Yes *	* Wyoming has been awarded a grant for $672,000 to develop a State Veterans Cemetery at Evansville, Wy.

STANDARD METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS

THIRTY-FIVE LARGEST SMSA's

YEAR 2000

RANK	SMSA	ESTIMATED VETERAN POPULATION	PERCENT OF TOTAL VETERAN POPULATION
1	LOS ANGELES,CA	1,017,280	3.92%
2	NEW YORK,NY-NJ	953,096	3.68%
3	CHICAGO,IL	798,187	3.08%
4	PHILADELPHIA,PA-NJ	624,754	2.41%
5	DETROIT,MI	554,785	2.14%
6	BOSTON, MA	474,466	1.83%
7	SAN FRAN - OAKLAND,CA	470,993	1.82%
8	DALLAS - FT. WORTH,TX	376,724	1.45%
9	WASHINGTON,DC-MD-VA	374,615	1.44%
10	ST. LOUIS,MO-IL	331,943	1.28%
11	PITTSBURGH,PA	311,446	1.20%
12	MINN.-ST. PAUL,MN-WI	307,768	1.19%
13	BALTIMORE, MD	304,319	1.17%
14	HOUSTON, TX	301,372	1.16%
15	NASSAU-SUFFOLK,NY	283,760	1.09%
16	NEWARK,NJ	266,967	1.03%
17	SEATTLE-EVERETT,WA	257,756	0.99%
18	ATLANTA,GA	252,812	0.98%
19	CLEVELAND,OH	243,428	0.94%
20	MIAMI,FL	238,335	0.92%
21	DENVER-BOULDER,CO	233,412	0.90%
22	TAMPA-ST. PETERSBURG,FL	232,666	0.90%
23	ANAHEIM,CA	221,518	0.85%
24	PHOENIX,AZ	204,803	0.79%
25	SAN DIEGO,CA	202,034	0.78%
26	MILWAUKEE,WI	195,188	0.75%
27	PORTLAND,OR-WA	192,139	0.74%
28	KANSAS CITY,MO-KS	187,477	0.72%
29	CINCINNATI,OH	168,428	0.65%
30	SAN JOSE,CA	160,516	0.62%
31	RIVERSIDE,CA	155,049	0.60%
32	BUFFALO,NY	144,106	0.56%
33	INDIANAPOLIS,IN	142,089	0.55%
34	COLUMBUS,OH	127,860	0.49%
35	NEW ORLEANS,LA	126,096	0.49%
	TOTALS	11,438,197	44.12%

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

STATEMENT OF

JAMES N. MAGILL, SPECIAL ASSISTANT
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION CEMETERY SYSTEM

WASHINGTON, D.C. APRIL 14, 1983

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the privilege to present to this distinguished Subcommittee the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States with respect to oversight of the National Cemetery System as administered by the Department of Memorial Affairs of the Veterans Administration.

Mr. Chairman, for a number of years the VFW has been mandated by Resolution to seek the establishment of an open national cemetery in every state so that veterans may be interred reasonably close to their survivors. For your review I have appended to my statement a copy of Resolution No. 629 entitled "To provide for a National Cemetery in Every State" which was passed by the voting delegates to our most recent National Convention. This is also one of our priority legislative goals, and the delay of its implementation serves to prevent veterans from seeking the use of such facilities through the VA and to seek them

through other sources, generally at greater expense. It is our understanding twelve states do not have a national cemetery. They are: Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Moreover, in five of the states that have at least one national cemetery, casketed interments are no longer being accepted. Alabama has one national cemetery and it is closed; Arizona, one, and it is closed; Maine, one, and it is closed; Maryland, three, and they are closed; and New Jersey, two, and they are closed. Not only do we believe that providing an open national cemetery in every state is the responsibility of the Federal Government, inasmuch as veterans were inducted into military service by that Government, but also that the maintenance of such cemeteries would be best served under Federal auspices rather than through other means. Another portion of this priority goal opposes the elimination of upright headstones now furnished by the Veterans Administration. While we appreciate the fact that upright marble or granite headstones are more subject to damage in shipment than flat bronze markers and, also, make more difficult the mowing of lawns in cemeteries, we strongly oppose their elimination. We believe there should continue to be free choice of headstones or markers particularly in national cemeteries. There are areas in this country where because of the ground being covered by deep snow for protracted periods during the winter, the survivors of veterans and even cemetery personnel are unable to locate specific graves identified by flat markers.

Mr. Chairman, with the Veterans Administration achieving its objective of designating one large national cemetery in each of the ten Standard Federal Regions and one close to Washington, D.C., we are pleased to note that progress is being made toward opening these sites. During the past year the post cemetery at Fort Custer, Michigan was opened to meet the requirements of Region V for a national

cemetery pending the opening of the Fort Custer National Cemetery in 1984. In Region III, the Indiantown Gap National Cemetery, Pennsylvania, is now open, and in Virginia, the Quantico National Cemetery is scheduled to be open for burials next month. Two other sites are in various development stages. In addition, information available to us indicates the Administrator still supports the need for a new national cemetery in the state of Florida, and we are pleased progress is being made on this particular cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, in your invitation to appear before this Subcommittee you requested our comments on the program to provide grants for state veterans' cemeteries. As you are aware, Public Law 95-476, due to expire at the end of FY 84, authorized the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to provide financial assistance on a 50-50 matching basis to states that wish to establish, improve, or expand their veterans' cemeteries, with any state being eligible to apply for such financial assistance for those purposes. The best information available to us indicates there is a strong interest in the State Cemetery Grants Program, but due to state financial constraints only a handful of states have participated. While we believe each state should have a national cemetery, we also believe that smaller, less costly cemeteries are needed for the interment of veterans desiring a final resting place with their departed comrades and near their homes and survivors. Therefore we would support legislation to extend this program.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, we were asked to comment on HR 2220, a bill introduced by the Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Chairman of this Subcommittee, to authorize the Administrator to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress. It is our understanding this bill would have minimal cost and provide for the safety of those wishing to visit the cemetery. We therefore have no objection to

the bill's enactment.

Mr. Chairman, it is projected by the VA that annual burials in national cemeteries will approach 100,000 in numbers by the year 2000. We believe this and other burial estimates may prove to be low. With the increase in demand for burial space, and the desire to be buried in a particular cemetery, many individuals are choosing cremation as a form of interment. While the VFW has no position on this subject, we believe accomodations should be made available for those expressing their cremated remains be interred in a national cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, also appended to my statement are copies of our current resolutions addressing issues pertinent to this hearing. They are:

Resolution No. 632 entitled, "Burial Benefit Allowance" and,

Resolution No. 766 entitled, "National Cemetery Markers."

This concludes my statement. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Resolution No. 629

TO PROVIDE FOR A NATIONAL CEMETERY IN EVERY STATE

WHEREAS, there are many states and regions of the United States without National Cemetery facilities; and

WHEREAS, Federal and State land ideally suited for cemetery development is available in many states; and

WHEREAS, veterans should be entitled to burial in a National Cemetery reasonably close to their homes; and

WHEREAS, VA's current policy of regionalization does not always assure that eligible deceased veterans can be interred close to their families, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the 83rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation to provide for at least one National Cemetery in each state to assure that all veterans may be buried in a National Cemetery reasonably close to their homes.

Adopted by the 83rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Los Angeles, California, August 13-19, 1982.

Resolution No. 629

Resolution No. 632

BURIAL BENEFIT ALLOWANCE

WHEREAS, the burial benefit is the single monetary benefit that has been available to the entire 25.7 million population of war veterans; and

WHEREAS, not more than half of the entire war veteran population ever receives any benefit from the Government; and

WHEREAS, the burial benefit which has provided $300.00 to all war veterans did insure them a decent burial; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the 83rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation in the Congress of the United States that would restore this worthwhile benefit retroactive to October 1, 1981.

Adopted by the 83rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Los Angeles, California, August 13-19, 1982.

Resolution No. 632

RESOLUTION NO. 766

NATIONAL CEMETERY MARKERS

WHEREAS, the tradition of national and military cemeteries is to mark the grave of a deceased veteran buried therein with either a cross or upright stone; and

WHEREAS, in some geographic areas the locating of graves poses much difficulty in the winter months due to heavy snow; and

WHEREAS, it is proposed to use flat markers to mark the graves of honorable veterans which lacks the beauty of row on row of upright markers; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the 83rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose any changes in the regulations that would eliminate the upright markers and degrade the beauty of our National Cemeteries.

Adopted by the 83rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Los Angeles, California, August 13-19, 1982.

Resolution No. 766

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
FOUNDED 1899

OFFICE OF
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

V. F. W. MEMORIAL BUILDING
200 MARYLAND AVENUE, N. E.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002

May 26, 1983

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Chairman
Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

During the Subcommittee's hearing on the Veterans Administration cemetery system, James N. Magill delivered testimony in which the VFW projected that annual burials in National Cemeteries will possibly exceed a VA estimate of 100,000 in number by the year 2000.

The VA now estimates a much lower number, 66,000. In response to your inquiry as to the variance in estimates, our projection was based upon the original VA estimate given us and, too, the increased usage of National Cemeteries due to the loss of the $300 burial allowance for most veterans. One must also recognize that surviving spouses and certain dependents are eligible for burial in a National Cemetery. Even with the VA re-estimating the veteran population we believe their projection is conservative and therefore will not be able to meet the demand of all those eligible for burial in a National Cemetery.

Sincerely,

Donald H. Schwab

DONALD H. SCHWAB, Director
National Legislative Service

STATEMENT OF
JOHN F. HEILMAN
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING & MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
APRIL 14, 1983

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the over three-quarters of a million members of the Disabled American Veterans, may I say that we deeply appreciate this opportunity to present our views on legislation and matters relating to the Veterans Administration's National Cemetery System.

Mr. Chairman, we commend you and the members of the Subcommittee for this timely exercise of your legislative oversight function and we trust that our remarks will prove beneficial to your deliberations today.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the Veterans Administration operates and maintains our National Cemetery System as a result of Public Law 93-43, which in 1973 consolidated 82 Department of the Army National Cemeteries, 32 burial plots and monument sites and 21 VA hospital cemeteries under the jurisdiction of the VA into the National Cemetery System.

Today this System consists of 108 cemeteries located in 38 states and Puerto Rico.

Of the 108 cemeteries, grave space is available in 58. Fifty cemeteries are considered "closed"--meaning that they are completely filled or that only the interment of veterans in previously reserved grave sites or the interment of eligible family members in occupied grave sites can take place.

It is interesting to note, Mr. Chairman, that 7 states contain only closed cemeteries, leaving 31 states and Puerto Rico with the 58 open cemeteries. However, the distribution of these open cemeteries is rather uneven.

For example, the states of Illinois (5), Tennessee (4), North Carolina (4), Arkansas (3), Mississippi (3), Kansas (3) and Texas (3) contain 25 of the 58 open cemeteries in the System. The remaining 33 open cemeteries are distributed among the other 24 states and Puerto Rico.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, this leaves 19 states with either no National Cemetery or a National Cemetery or Cemeteries which are closed.

Since the VA takeover of the System in 1973, eight National Cemeteries have been designated. Five of these are now open for

interments--Calverton, New York; Riverside, California; Bourne, Massachusetts; Fort Custer, Michigan and Indian Town Gap, Pennsylvania. The Quantico VA Cemetery will officially open on May 16 of this year and the Fort Mitchell, Alabama Cemetery is scheduled to open in 1988. In addition, deliberations are now being made as to a cemetery site in Florida (it appears 400 acres will possibly be donated by the state of Florida for a cemetery).

Mr. Chairman, except for the development in existing National Cemeteries and the ongoing site selection for a cemetery in Florida, the current VA program of expansion of the System is based upon the philosophy that one National Cemetery should be constructed in each of the ten designated federal regions.

Quite frankly, the DAV holds the view that this regional concept of expansion is too restrictive and not realistically in tune with the long-range aspects of our nation's veteran burial needs.

Our organization, in accordance with a resolution adopted by the delegates to our most recent National Convention, believes that expansion of the System should be based upon a policy which contains the ultimate goal of providing at least one National Cemetery in each state. Every eligible veteran, we feel, should have the right to seek burial in a National Cemetery that is reasonably close to the area in which he lives to facilitate personal maintenance and visitation by his survivors.

In support of our position, I would like to quote an excerpt from a Program Evaluation Summary Report dated June 13, 1980 entitled, "National Cemeteries, Headstones and Markers":

> The National Cemetery System buried 37,013 decedents in fiscal year 1977 and 36,743 in fiscal year 1978. Approximately 71% of the deceased buried in the System during these two years were veterans or active duty decedents and 29% were spouses or dependents. Around 80% of those buried in National Cemeteries lived within 50 miles of the National Cemetery in which buried. (emphasis added)

We believe that in the long-term, with the rapidly aging veteran population and with the growth and shift in our nation's population centers, a National Cemetery in every state is a realistic necessity.

We trust that you will give serious consideration to these thoughts, Mr. Chairman, and urge the Subcommittee to advocate expansion of the System on a state by state basis.

Notwithstanding the above, Mr. Chairman, the DAV recognizes the current economic crisis which exists in our government today and the fiscal constraints within which this Subcommittee and, indeed, the entire Congress must operate.

Therefore, given the atmosphere of fiscal austerity, we would suggest to the Subcommittee that greater utilization of the

Matching Grants to States Program for the construction, expansion or improvement of State Veterans Cemeteries is one avenue by which the federal government can offset the cost of cemetery construction and still meet the burial needs of our nation's veteran population. At the same time, this program provides the various states with the opportunity to share in our federal government's obligation.

H.R. 2220 & Draft Bill

Introduced on May 21, 1983 by yourself, Mr. Chairman, at the request of the Administration, H.R. 2220 proposes to amend Chapter 24, Title 38, U. S. Code, thereby giving the Administrator the authority to make contributions to local authorities toward, or for, the construction of traffic controls, road improvements or other devices adjacent to National Cemeteries if considered necessary for safe ingress or egress.

The draft bill is also an Administration proposal which, through amendment of Chapter 24, Title 38, USC, would provide for a five year extension of the current authority to grant the various states the right to apply for federal aid in establishing, expanding or improving State Veterans Cemeteries (current authority is due to expire at the end of fiscal year 1984).

Mr. Chairman, the DAV supports the Congressional passage of these two measures. We would, however, make one comment relative to the State Cemetery proposal.

Public Law 95-476, which instituted the State Matching Cemetery Grant Program, authorized the appropriation of $5 million in fiscal year 1980 and similar authorizations in each of the succeeding four fiscal years. The extension authority contained in the draft bill provides for the appropriation of additional appropriate sums in fiscal year 1985 and in each of the succeeding four fiscal years.

Our comment, Mr. Chairman, is simply to urge the Subcommittee to exercise continued use of its oversight function in each of the fiscal years 1985 through 1989 toward the goal of assuring that the appropriations process of the Congress provides adequate funding for the grant program.

This completes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. Thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to appear here today.

21-063 O—83——7

Don Mica
FLA.

HONORABLE DANIEL A. MICA

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

HEARING ON THE VA CEMETERY SYSTEM

MR. CHAIRMAN, IT IS CERTAINLY A PLEASURE TO BE A MEMBER OF THIS DISTINGUISHED SUBCOMMITTEE AND TO MEET ON THIS OCCASION TO DISCUSS THE VA CEMETERY SYSTEM. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BRING THE COMMITTEE UP TO DATE ON THE STATUS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A VA CEMETERY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA BY SUBMITTING FOR THE RECORD A COPY OF A LETTER I RECEIVED FROM MR. PAUL BANNAI, CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR OF THE VA.

AS YOU MAY KNOW, I HAVE BEEN INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL CEMETERY IN FLORIDA SINCE THE 96TH CONGRESS, WHEN I WAS FIRST ELECTED. IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO ALERT THIS SUBCOMMITTEE, THE CONGRESS, AND THE VA TO THE URGENT NEED AND SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL CEMETERY IN FLORIDA, I HAVE AGAIN INTRODUCED THIS LEGISLATION.

THIS BILL, H.R. 1346, SPECIFICALLY STATES THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE VA MAY ACQUIRE BY GIFT, INCLUDING DONATIONS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA, LAND FOR A NATIONAL CEMETERY. AS YOU MAY KNOW, GOVERNOR GRAHAM OF FLORIDA HAS OFFERED TO DONATE 400 ACRES IN THE WITHLACOOCHEE STATE FOREST TO THE VA FOR USE AS A NATIONAL CEMETERY. ON BEHALF OF THE 1.5 MILLION VETERANS IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA, I URGE THE VA ADMINISTRATOR TO ACCEPT THE GOVERNOR'S OFFER, AND TO WORK WITH THIS SUBCOMMITTEE IN UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THANK YOU.

Office of The Chief
Memorial Affairs
Director

Washington, D.C. 20420

Veterans Administration

MAR 16 1983

Honorable Daniel A. Mica
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Mica:

Recent media attention to the decision of Florida Governor Robert Graham and his Cabinet to donate 400 acres in the Withlacoochee State Forest to the VA for use as a national cemetery, has raised a number of questions regarding the proposed cemetery.

The purpose of this letter is to provide the most recent VA projections for the opening of the Florida national cemetery. The estimated timetable that follows is based on the orderly completion of the actions required to establish and develop the cemetery.

Sequential Actions	Date
Publish final EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) in Federal Register	April 1983
Record of Decision, site designation, by the Administrator	June 1983
Start master planning	June 1983
Complete master planning	June 1984
Request funds from Congress	FY 1986 Budget (July 1, 1984 is the start of the FY 1986 budget cycle)
Start working drawings	October 1985
Start construction	November 1986
Complete construction	January 1988
Open cemetery for interments	Spring 1988

In Reply Refer To:

Honorable Daniel A. Mica

While the foregoing timetable tracks the normal course of events, we will make every effort to improve that schedule.

I trust the information furnished will be of assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Paul T. Bannai

PAUL T. BANNAI
Chief Memorial Affairs Director

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN McCAIN

April 13, 1983

STATEMENT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE RECORD OF THE PRINTED HEARINGS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS ON OVERSIGHT OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEMS

Mr. Chairman, I welcome having the opportunity to present to this Subcommittee not only my concerns, but those of the Veterans of Arizona regarding the establishment of a National Veterans Cemetery at the site of the Arizona State Cemetery.

As you know, the National Cemetery System was enacted in 1862 and intended to provide places of burial for soldiers who died in military service during the Civil War. The 1870, 62 national cemeteries had been established in close proximity to Civil War battlefields and hospital sites. Although the National Cemetery System has been expanding over the years to include 109 cemeteries, the vast majority are located in the East and South. Although the Veterans Administration, which has jurisdiction over the National Cemetery System, has attempted to redress the imbalance in the location of our national cemeteries, the fact remains that a disproportionate few are located in the West. Today, the closest cemetery available for interment of Arizona Veterans is located in Riverside, California, some 300 miles away -- a long distance for families of those buried in a national cemetery to travel.

While the general Veteran population has increased by 8.8% in the past 10 years, Arizona's Veteran population has increased at an astonishing rate of 48.2%. It is important to note that the Veteran population is steadily aging. World War II Veterans are rapidly approaching an average age of 65 and currently number about 140,000. These numbers will surely increase as more and more elderly Veterans elect to spend their retirement years in Arizona. Mr. Chairman, the need for a National Cemetery is obvious.

It is for these reasons that I have joined with my Colleagues, Mr. Rudd, Mr. Udall, Mr. Stump and Mr. McNulty, in introducing HR 1906 which would provide for the establishment of a National Cemetery in Maricopa County, Arizona. I strongly urge your favorable consideration of this legislation on behalf of the Arizona Veterans.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JOHN F. SOMMER, JR., DEPUTY DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 14, 1983

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Legion is pleased to have this opportunity to present its views on a legislative proposal that is under consideration by the Subcommittee, and to comment on the operation of the National Cemetery System by the Veterans Administration's Department of Memorial Affairs.

The Legislation, H.R. 2220, introduced on behalf of the Administration, would amend Chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, by authorizing the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to make contributions for construction projects on land adjacent to national cemeteries in order to facilitate safe ingress or egress.

The American Legion understands the necessity of making such contributions to local authorities for the construction of traffic controls, improvement of streets and roads, and other adjustments necessary to ensure safety in entering and exiting a national cemetery. Therefore, we support the enactment of this measure.

The National Cemetery System, as administered by the Department of Memorial Affairs consists of 107 cemeteries located in 40 States and Puerto Rico, and an additional 3 proposed cemeteries in various stages of development. There are 55 active cemeteries.

We have seen a substantial amount of activity and significant improvements since the National Cemetery System was transferred from the Department of the Army to the Veterans Administration on

September 1, 1973, as the result of the enactment of Public Law 93-43. At that time 82 cemeteries consisting of 3,249 acres of land (2,165 of which were developed for burials and 1,084 that were undeveloped) were involved in the transfer. Subsequently, on July 1, 1974, 21 cemeteries located at VA medical centers were transferred into the system by the Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

The American Legion is pleased to see that in several instances cemeteries that were scheduled to close will remain open for burials because the Department of Memorial Affairs has been able to acquire additional land by donation, or through the abandonment of Federal land. And the Legion is proud of its involvement in securing donated land in a number of these instances, enabling the cemeteries to remain open so that veterans dying in those areas may be laid to rest near their families and loved ones.

The Veterans Administration has also been able to increase the longevity of the national cemeteries by reducing the size of the gravesites. This economical utilization of the land has increased the number of gravesites per acre by 55 percent, according to VA figures, thereby increasing the length of time the active cemeteries may be used for the interment of veterans.

In addition, the in-ground interment of cremated remains and the construction of columbaria have proven successful as means by which to extend the life of national cemeteries.

With respect to the continuing need for additional burial space for veterans across the nation, The American Legion is

pleased with the ongoing expansion and development program that has been undertaken by the Department of Memorial Affairs. Additional land is being developed for future use in the cemeteries at Calverton, New York; Fort Custer, Michigan; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Fort Snelling, Minnesota; and Houston, Texas.

New national cemeteries are being developed, and the next one to open will be the Quantico, Virginia cemetery which is scheduled to commence operation on May 15th. The Quantico facility is of particular importance to veterans residing in the Washington metropolitan area because of the restricted eligibility criteria for burial in Arlington National Cemetery.

The national cemetery at Fort Mitchell, Alabama is still in the planning stages, and a proposed cemetery in Florida is being discussed, but a site has not been decided upon.

Public Law 95-476 established a program wherein the Veterans Administration may provide assistance to States for the establishment, expansion, and improvement of State veterans cemeteries. The program, supported by The American Legion, became operational in 1980. Since the program was implemented, 35 States and territories have expressed an interest in participating. Recent figures available to the Legion reflect that 11 States have submitted 16 applications for VA assistance with veterans cemeteries totalling over $8.8 million. As of the end of February, nine grants had been awarded and the remaining requests were pending completion of the application and review process.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion's policy on improving

the National Cemetery System and death and burial benefits for veterans is set forth in Resolution No. 384 (New York), approved by the Delegates to the 1982 National Convention (copy attached). In part, this resolution, and Resolution No. 394 (Wisconsin), of our 1982 National Convention, mandated the Legion to sponsor and support legislation to restore the burial allowance as a benefit to be provided for the burial of all honorably discharged war veterans, and to increase the burial allowance to $400 plus the $150 plot allowance. Based upon that policy, H.R. 1479 has been introduced on behalf of this organization. The enactment of this measure would correct the inequity brought about by PL 97-35, the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, that eliminated the $300 burial benefit payable toward the funeral expense of a deceased veteran, except for those receiving compensation or pension at the time of death, or those who die in a VA hospital.

Thousands of war veterans never approach the Veterans Administration for any kind of benefit during their lifetime, and for these veterans, the only recognition received for honorable service has been the burial benefit provided upon their death.

In addition, the cost of funeral arrangements and burial are now considerably higher than in October 1978, when the allowance was increased to $300 as a result of the enactment of PL 95-479, and in many instances the families of veterans have limited resources with which to provide a decent funeral for the deceased veterans.

To the American Legion the elimination of the burial benefit for the majority of war veterans is a serious matter, deserving of

the attention of Congress.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes our statement. We thank the Subcommittee for receiving our views.

SIXTY-FOURTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, AUGUST 24, 25, 26, 1982

RESOLUTION: No. 384 (New York)

COMMITTEE: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: The American Legion Policy on improving the National Cemetery System and death and burial benefits for veterans

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery System of the Veterans Administration is proceeding with development and expansion of the National Cemetery System; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the actions by the Veterans Administration to further develop and expand the National Cemetery System; and

WHEREAS, legislation enacted by Congress and signed by the President in 1981 took away the burial benefit previously provided for the burial of all honorably discharged war veterans; and restricted that benefit to certain categories of veterans; and

WHEREAS, based on its support of the principles of equal benefits for equal service, The American Legion has strongly supported the equity of the provision of the burial benefit to all honorably discharged war veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Chicago, Illinois, August 24, 25, 26, 1982, that The American Legion call upon the Veterans Administration to establish additional national cemeteries wherever a need for them is apparent; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that The American Legion shall support legislation to provide contract burials for veterans who are indigent at time of death; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that The American Legion shall support necessary funding providing for the construction of columbaria and mausoleums wherever feasible within national cemeteries; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, that The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to restore the burial allowance as a benefit to be provided for the burial of all honorably discharged war veterans, and provided further that this burial allowance shall not be in an amount less than $400.

APPROVED

Statement of Charles W. Stenholm

Mr. Chairman, I respectfully request that a study be initiated to consider the feasibility of establishing a National Cemetery in west central Texas. Any new National Cemetery must be demonstrated to be cost effective and represent the needs of the community to be served. In addition, it should reflect the geographic realities and population distribution in the area.

Any study should consider the fact that there are only three National Cemeteries in Texas. All provide veterans with the respectful internment that their service merits. However, all three of the cemeteries, Fort Bliss, Houston, and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, lie a considerable distance away from the 17th district. Travel to and from the gravesite can represent a considerable hardship on the family of the deceased.

The importance of our National Cemetery system is a reality we all recognize. These cemeteries have traditionally provided veterans with a dignified and respectful final resting place. The quiet solitude of the grounds allows the survivor to feel the honor and integrity for which these veterans dedicated their lives.

I will appreciate the Committee's consideration of this matter and will be pleased to provide any information that may be required.

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